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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE EDUCATION OF EDMONTON'S URBAN POOR: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

BY

WILLIAM GORDON MAYNES

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1990

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TITLE OF THESIS: THE EDUCATION OF EDMONTON'S URBAN POOR: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

DEGREE: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: SPRING, 1990

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W. G. Maynes

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

8724 - 92B Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada, T6C 1S9

DATE: Dec. 4, 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE EDUCATION OF EDMONTON'S URBAN POOR: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE submitted by William Gordon Maynes in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R. G. McIntosh
R. G. McIntosh, Supervisor

Gordon Fearn
G. Fearn

D. A. MacKay

E. Miklos
E. Miklos

Norman J. Boyan
N. J. Boyan, External Examiner

Date: Sept. 25, 1989

ABSTRACT

The Education of Edmonton's Urban Poor: A Policy Perspective examines the extent to which poverty in Edmonton presents issues likely to be considered in educational policymaking. The Richmond and Kotelchuck (1983) Three Factor Model served as a general heuristic to guide data collection and analysis in this interpretive field study. The model directs attention toward relevant bases of knowledge, social strategies with potential for addressing a policy issue, and the political will to act on a particular issue. Interview data gathered from key stakeholders (11 principals, 15 senior administrators, and 11 school board trustees) from two school districts were supplemented by analysis of relevant documents and by selected observations.

Themes derived from the data were presented in such a way as to explicate each of the stakeholder groups' perceptions and experiences of poverty and education. The chapters devoted to this provide insight into the nature of, and interrelationships among, the work-lives of principals, senior administrators, and trustees. These chapters demonstrate that the stakeholder groups had constructed quite different social realities pertaining to poverty and education.

The major finding of the study, expressed as a working hypothesis, was that it was unlikely that educational poverty policies would be developed in the foreseeable future. Among the factors considered in arriving at this hypothesis, only one factor -- the knowledge bases of principals -- was favorable to the development of such policies. The knowledge bases of senior administrators and trustees were unfavorable. None of the stakeholder groups had sufficient knowledge of social strategies with potential to address poverty-related issues. Although principals felt strongly that current policies and practices were not sufficient to address extant poverty-related concerns, many trustees and senior administrators disagreed. Perhaps of most significance was that none of the stakeholder

groups perceived sufficient political will to motivate districts to initiate policymaking to address poverty-related issues.

The thesis concludes with the author's personal reflections on the manner in which the study could inform a strategy of social action aimed at encouraging the development of educational poverty policies.

Researchers exploring alternatives to traditional post-hoc policy studies, most of which have been carried out in the positivistic research tradition, may find the methodology of this study interesting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this thesis was due in large measure to the cooperation, support, guidance, and assistance of many people. Certainly the study could not have been conducted without the cooperation of the principals, senior administrators, and trustees who participated. Their patience during the interviews and, later, in reviewing the chapters I had written about their experiences, is greatly appreciated. There are many others to be thanked.

The study would not have been undertaken without the encouragement and support of my thesis advisor, Dr. R.G. McIntosh -- scholar, mentor, and friend. He provided patient guidance throughout the conduct of the study, spent hours reviewing drafts and discussing ideas, and was a constant source of inspiration, encouragement, and support .

Dr. E. Miklos reviewed early drafts and providing sound counsel throughout the study. His insightful scholarly feedback was particularly useful in strengthening the final chapters and in ensuring that those chapters were reported in a manner that reflected the interpretive paradigm which guided the study.

Dr. D.A. MacKay also reviewed early drafts and provided constructive feedback. Many of [illegible] ideas underlying the general heuristic which guided data collection and analysis were formulated in discussions with Dr. MacKay.

Dr. M.L. Haughey played a key role in the development of my thesis proposal. I greatly appreciate both the guidance she provided in matters related to methodology, and the positive suggestions for change she offered during the candidacy exam.

In the early stages of the study, Dr. H. Krahn, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta assisted greatly in ensuring that the literature review accurately reflected relevant sociological perspectives. Many of the sociological points of view, which he provided during the candidacy exam, are reflected in the final draft.

The extreme care with which Dr. G. Fearn, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta reviewed the thesis for the final oral exam led to both technical and conceptual revisions which greatly improved the quality of the document. I extend special thanks to him for the warm human response he extended toward me throughout the final oral examination. That response freed me from much of the tension I was feeling, and allowed me to participate fully in the scholarly discussion of my thesis.

It was an honor to have such a renowned scholar as Dr. N.J. Boyan, University of California, Santa Barbara, as an external examiner. His thoughtful review of the thesis contributed to a rigorous, exciting, and fulfilling final oral examination.

To all of these scholars, I owe a great debt of gratitude. Not only is my thesis better due to their efforts, but, through knowing each of them, I have grown personally and as a scholar.

I have taken many courses from many professors, each of whom has helped shape my thinking about educational administration. In some way, each has influenced the development of this study. I extend special thanks to Dr. E.W. Ratsoy, and Dr. D.M. Richards, who through their courses, allowed me to explore relationships between economics and organizational theory from an interpretive point of view. That work is reflected in the dissertation.

I reserve my deepest sense of gratitude for my wife, Heather Rask-Maynes, and my son, Craig. They have been tolerant, understanding, and loving in their approach to a husband and father who was, at best, distracted, and, at worst, consumed by this research. Any success I have had is theirs as well.

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CHAPTER I

RATIONALE, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

Since the establishment of universal public education in Canada, the acquisition and redistribution of resources in such a way as to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, and equity has been a major avowed goal of educational policy. The redistributive nature of educational policy is best understood in terms of the criterion of "equity." With respect to this criterion, Nwabuogu (1984, p. 74) has identified four stages through which a the educational policies of a society may evolve. He demonstrated that educational policies may reflect concern with equity in terms of (1) equality of access, (2) equality of participation, (3) equality of results, or (4) equality of education's effects on life's chances. After a discussion of each of those possibilities, he wrote:

> One could theorize that the traditional view of equal educational access, which regards the provision of schooling of whatever quality as evidence of equal educational opportunity, is the first step in the evolution of any public school system, and that as society prospers politically, economically, and socially, the move toward equalizing resource inputs and individual achievements begins to emerge. (p. 74)

In a Canadian context, the manner in which policies related to the education of the urban poor have evolved seems to support Nwabuogu's "theory." Having passed the stages of providing equal access and participation, cities such as Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Winnipeg, all of which have large populations of economically disadvantaged children, have initiated affirmative action programs based on policies which address the goals of equality of results and equality of effects on life's chances (Halifax Board of Education, 1981; School Council of the Island of Montreal, 1983; Ottawa Board of Education, 1986; Toronto Board of Education, 1981; and The Winnipeg School Division No. 1, 1984).

Although no such policies are currently in place in Alberta, there are signs that issues related to child poverty are beginning to emerge and to be identified as appropriate for consideration in educational policy. One indicator is that the issues have been receiving attention from the media (e.g., Sherlock, 1988, February 15, 16, and 17). Another is that, for the past several years, two of the largest school districts in the province have been investigating issues related to the education of economically disadvantaged children (e.g., Edmonton Public Schools, 1987 and 1989).

It may well be that, with respect to the education of the urban poor, policymaking bodies in Alberta are at the earliest stages in the policy development process. In Dunn's (1981, p.107) terms, they may be engaged in those phases of the "problem structuring" process that precede the specification of a substantive problem. This possibility provided the motivation for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which urban poverty in Edmonton presents issues which are likely to be considered in educational policymaking. This purpose was pursued through an examination of the interaction of issues related to urban poverty and educational policymaking in the Edmonton context. The extent to which those issues were considered in provincial and school district policy was examined, as was the extent to which relevant stakeholders believed that urban poverty presented educational problems that should be the subject of new or revised policies.

Research Questions

The research was guided by four major questions. The first two, *What educational issues do key stakeholders perceive to be related to urban poverty in Edmonton?*, and *From the points of view of key stakeholders, how successfully do current policies deal with poverty-related educational issues?* addressed the need to explicate the state of affairs at the time of the study. The third, *What factors or forces are currently acting to support or to constrain the development of new or revised policies pertaining to the education of urban poor children?*, focused on identification of factors that influenced policymakers' levels of motivation to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Information gathered and inferences drawn from the investigation of the first three questions allowed consideration of a reflective question. *Within the Edmonton context of the study, what inferences can be drawn with respect to the nature of the earliest stage of the policymaking process?* These reflections are expressed in the form of tentative hypotheses about the nature of the theoretical contribution of this study, and about potential applications of the results of the study.

Significance of the Study

Dror (1971, p. 89) began his discussion of research in the policy sciences with an assertion that the discipline is relatively undeveloped and uncharted. He argued that successful development of the policy sciences will depend upon the nature and the quality of future policy research. Among his criteria for quality research, he included the need for research to be conducted in the arena of "real-life policymaking" (p. 90). This was a comment on the need for research to complement the more frequent "post hoc" policy studies which examine policymaking from a point in time after policy development and implementation. Dror was calling for policy research to be conducted during the actual process of policymaking.

In the same source, Dror identified the "study of issue formulation and problem taxonomy" (p. 98) as one of the major areas in which there is need for research. While addressing the same issue, Dunn (1981, p.98) wrote:

> Problem structuring, which is that phase in the process of inquiry where analysts grope toward possible definitions of a problematic situation is no doubt the most crucial, but least understood aspect of policy analysis.

Then, reflecting on the importance of the problem structuring phase, Dunn noted that "policy analysts fail more often because they solve the wrong problem than because they get the wrong solution to the right problem" (p. 98). It would seem that the earliest stages of the policy development process may be both the most important and the least understood of the stages.

The theoretical significance of this study can be best understood in terms of the two points made above. The study departs from the traditional "post hoc" approach to policy studies in the sense that it is a "real time" study of a potential policy issue. Moreover, the study focuses on the problem structuring phase of the policy development process and thus contributes to the store of knowledge pertaining to the least well understood aspect of that process. A more general argument for significance is that case studies, such as this, are necessary antecedents of theory development. It was this to which de Leon referred when he argued "that grand conceptual architectures should be grounded in concrete examples" (1981, p. 5). This study presents one of those concrete examples.

The practical significance of the study relates to its potential for informing policymakers as to both the nature of the issues related to poverty and the implications of those issues for educational policy. Such an endeavor may be timely, for poverty seems to be emerging as a serious social issue in Alberta. The Edmonton Social Planning Council (1986), for example, has noted that the number of families that live in poverty in Alberta more than doubled between 1981, when 49,200 families had total incomes below the Statistics Canada low income cut-offs, and 1984, when 100,700 families had total incomes below those cut-offs. As discussed above, the recent attention given to the issues by the media and by the two largest urban school districts are other indicators that poverty is emerging as an issue to be considered in Alberta.

Levin (1985) has provided the most compelling argument for the practical significance of a study of the relationship between educational policy and the issues related to poverty. He noted that as of 1983, 22% of the children in the United States lived in poverty (p. 6). Levin predicted that if the "disadvantaged population increases without appropriate educational intervention, it is likely to form the underclass of a dual society" (p. 11). In the same document, he argued that if such a dual society were to obtain, the result would be national economic disaster (pp. 11-12). He did, however, conclude on a more encouraging note: "Although these consequences seem to be reasonable projections of the present situation, they can be averted through judicious public policy" (p. 12).

In reflecting on the applicability of Levin's arguments to the Edmonton context, one need only note that as of 1984, one in six Alberta families lived in poverty (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1986). This proportion, while smaller than that derived in the United States, is substantial enough to suggest that Levin's arguments may well apply to Alberta. Moreover, if indeed his arguments are considered relevant, then so too should his advice be heeded:

> As with all social investments, time is of the essence. Schooling requires a considerable gestation period before its payoffs are evident. We must move with a great sense of urgency if we are to avert the costly consequences of past inaction. (1985, p. 23)

The extent to which this study has potential for facilitating such a move is a measure of its practical significance.

Definitions

1. Urban poor children: Urban children whose families earn less than the Statistics Canada low income cut-offs are defined as being economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this study, "poverty" and "economic disadvantage" are considered to be synonymous.
2. Urban poor communities: Communities in which the urban poor constitute a large proportion of the residents.
3. Urban poor schools: Schools which serve urban poor communities.

4. Policy: For the purposes of this study, policy is defined as any established written or unwritten commitment to a particular course of action with respect to an issue. Thus, a poverty policy could either be in writing, or it could consist of a series of well established programs of which the purpose is widely understood to be ameliorating poverty.
5. Policy environment: A policy environment includes those aspects of an environment that either do, or at least have potential to, bear on the description, exploration, or resolution of a particular issue. As Richmond and Kotelchuck's (1983) model suggests, the policy environment will have components related to (1) a knowledge base, (2) social programs, and (3) political will, as they pertain to a particular issue. This definition of a policy environment is explicated in Chapter II.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted as an "interpretive field study" (Wolcott, 1982, p. 163). The purpose of this discussion of research design and methodology is to clarify what that design entailed and to examine its potential strengths and weaknesses. The discussion proceeds through an examination of the nature of interpretive inquiry and the ontological and epistemological assumptions which underlie the study, to the more pragmatic considerations of "methodologies" and "standards of rigor."

The Nature of Interpretive Inquiry

A decade ago, the issue of whether interpretive research had a legitimate claim to the title of scholarly inquiry was the subject of much debate in the literature, usually under a heading such as "Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research Methodologies". The entire December 1979 issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly,* for example, was devoted to that topic. Today, although that debate occasionally resurfaces (see, for example, the January 1984 issue of *Dialogue*), it would seem as though scholars such as Burrell and

Morgan (1979), Greenfield (1986), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been successful in establishing a legitimate place for interpretive inquiry in educational research.

Methodological theorists are currently more concerned with the issues of whether and to what extent interpretive and positivistic approaches are compatible (Fineman and Mangham, 1983; Firestone, 1987; Husen, 1988; and Keeves, 1988) and which phenomena or topics are most appropriately investigated through each of the modes of inquiry (e.g., Kelly, 1986). Because both of these issues influenced the development of this study, they will be discussed briefly.

Firestone (1987, p. 16) noted that there are two positions with respect to the first issue. He labelled "purists" those who "believe that the two methods [quantitative and qualitative] are incompatible because they are based on paradigms that make different assumptions about the world." Firestone then (p. 16) described "pragmatists" as being at an opposite extreme in the sense that they see methods as only "collections of techniques" and thus not inherently linked to a particular paradigm. After exploring those two positions in some detail, Firestone concluded that:

> Choosing methods then is not just a matter of coming at a single truth from different directions. Nor is it solely a pragmatic question of fitting research techniques to a problem as the pragmatists suggest, although that does happen. On the other hand, one's method is not as rigorously determined by the choice of paradigm as the purists suggest. There are in fact a number of reasons for selecting a methodological approach, but one's decision often expresses values about what the world is like, how one ought to understand it, and what the most important threats to that understanding are. (p. 20)

Firestone was arguing that while one's ontological and epistemological beliefs may be reflected in the choice of research methodology, those beliefs do not force the choice. A functionalist could choose to conduct a case study and an interpretive researcher could choose to conduct an experiment. The paradigmatic orientation of the researcher will, however, be clearly reflected in the purposes for which data are collected and in the manner in which meaning is ascribed to those data. To the extent that this is the case, it is reasonable to conclude that, while researchers are free to use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, integrity demands that prior to drawing inferences with respect to any data they must make explicit their ontological and epistemological beliefs so that readers might evaluate the inferences.

Fineman and Mangham (1983, p. 300), Firestone (1987, p. 19), Healy (1988, p. 392), Husen (1988, p. 8) Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 306), Spicer (1976, p. 341), and Turner (1981, p. 243) are among the many who support the notion of incorporating multiple methods in a study. Fineman and Mangham (1983) summarized the position nicely:

> the extent to which our understanding of individuals, groups and organizations derives from qualitative or quantitative studies is less material to us than that *each* form be represented in our overall endeavour. Beyond this, we feel that going out and doing some research, elaborating some ideas, and floating some wild notions will serve our cause much better than continuing the arguments about how to hold the brush and which colors to use. (p. 300)

This study proceeded in the spirit of the position described above. While the study was conducted as an interpretive field study, some quantitative data were collected, but then always interpreted on the basis of ontological and epistemological assumptions rooted in an interpretive paradigm. Those assumptions, because they are a central part of the study and therefore need to be explicated, are the subject of a major discussion presented later in this chapter.

The second issue, that pertaining to which mode of inquiry is more appropriate for specific kinds of research, bears on this study in the sense that the standard orientation, or in Healy's (1986, p. 381) words, the "received view" of policy studies is grounded in the [illegible]tivistic paradigm. The "received view", however, is not a consensus view. As early as 1978, Collins and Noblit were arguing that the interpretive approach has great potential for strengthening policy studies. They wrote:

> field research is grounded in assessing conflict, resistance, evasions, fronts, lies and so on. Both for successfully conducting the research and for understanding multiperspectival realities, field research is the vehicle by which one can better understand human conflict. Since conflict and resistance are both stuffs for which policies must appropriately account if they are to be successful, field research is highly policy relevant. (1978, p. 27)

More recent discussions of this issue in the policy journals (e. g., Healy, 1986; Kelly, 1986; and Lincoln and Guba, 1986) arrive at similar conclusions. Healy, for example, argued that those pursuing positivistic approaches to policy research have difficulty dealing with two circumstances that are characteristic of policy arenas. The first is that most policy problems are "ill structured" or "wicked" in character. That is, they "lack not just an agreed-on, unique best solution but also (even) a unique best formulation" (Healy, 1986, p. 383). Healy explained why interpretive approaches are particularly appropriate for analyzing such problems:

> Rather than pursuing the kind of epistemological certainty and unique best solution to policy problems envisioned by instrumental rationality, the interpretive approach fosters the understanding that a multiplicity of competing interpretations are possible with regard to both the problem formulation and the solution space. On the interpretive account, this plurivocity of interpretations derives from the fact that social reality cannot be apprehended in a context-less, culture-free way, but depends rather on the situated perspectives of both the social actors and the observer who seeks to understand their social world. This means that no single viewpoint, however well-informed, is adequate to the task of definitively characterizing social reality, or in the case of policy analysis, of definitively formulating the problem situation. (p. 387)

The second circumstance that is not handled well by positivistic approaches to policy research is that the selection of goals, which according to Healy (1986, p. 384) is an inherently value-laden task, is a necessary step in policymaking. Moreover, decisions with respect to the means of achieving goals inevitably affect the well being of people and are therefore moral in nature (Healy, 1986. p. 384). Unlike positivistic approaches, which tend to claim value-neutrality, interpretive approaches consider values as central to social inquiry and thus are better able to account for the values dimension of policymaking.

Pursuing arguments of the nature outlined above, scholars such as Healy, Kelly, Lincoln, and Guba have succeeded in establishing a legitimate place for interpretive policy research. Lincoln and Guba (1986) stated the position most strongly. They suggested that policy research is paradigmatically "more amenable to providing meaningful results in inquiry when it is carried out naturalistically than conventionally" (p. 563).

This introductory discussion of methodological issues establishes three positions of importance to this study. The first, and indeed a necessary starting position, is that it is legitimate to pursue policy studies from an interpretive point of view. The second position is to assert that both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques can contribute to interpretive policy studies. When both are used, however, it is a matter of integrity that researchers explicate the assumptions about knowledge that underlie the manner in which meaning is ascribed to data. This leads to the third position which is that ontological and epistemological assumptions must be made explicit so that readers can assess inferences drawn from data.

The three positions outlined above established starting points for this study. The study was conducted as an interpretive policy study and utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. The task prescribed by the third position, that of explicating the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the study, is addressed in the next section of this chapter.

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

In their discussion of the "naturalistic paradigm," which for the purposes of this study is considered to be synonymous with the interpretive paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985 and 1986) set out their paradigmatic assumptions in terms of five axioms. The following discussion of ontological and epistemological assumptions focuses on explicating the manner in which those axioms apply to this study.

Axiom 1: The Nature of Reality

> There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding (*verstehen*) can be achieved. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37)

The essence of this axiom is that social reality does not exist outside of individuals' perceptions. Individuals construct their own realities based on their experiences, the meanings they ascribe to those experiences, and the purposes they seek to achieve (Magoon, 1977, p. 652). Rein (cited in Healy, 1986, p. 388) reflected on the impact of this concept on attempts to understand the poverty problem:

> Though we know that poverty is a real phenomenon, the size of the problem, its character, and the course of action that policy should accept in combatting it will depend largely on how we define and conceptualize poverty. In other words, the facts we attend to depend upon the construction we impose on reality. We construe reality; it is our only way of understanding it. The construal of reality, in turn, depends upon our purposes.

The major implication for this study is that the researcher did not seek to clarify an absolute or correct position with respect to issues related to the education of the urban poor, but instead sought to gain an understanding of the realities constructed by key individuals in the policy arena.

Axiom 2: The Relationship of Knower to Known

> The inquirer and the "object" of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37)

This axiom asserts that there is a necessary interaction between the researcher and the substance of the research. Much has been written about the nature of this interaction. Turner, for example, wrote:

> Some of the decisions about which facts to pursue are solved for the researcher by subconscious perceptual processes which influence what is observed, and other influences are exerted upon the direction of the analysis by the limited information handling capacity of the human brain. The understanding which emerges from such research must thus be considered the product of an interaction between the researcher and the phenomena under study. (1981, p. 228)

Turner was noting that the interactive effect begins even before data are collected. The choice of both the problem to investigate and the "facts to pursue" in the investigation reflect implicitly held theories about the nature of the issues being studied. Fineman and Mangham discussed another subtle form of interactivity:

> Those whom we are interested in knowing more about (the 'subjects' in traditional jargon), whether regarding the researcher/co-investigator as 'one of us' or 'one of them', will act according to the assumptions (perhaps shifting) he or she holds about the interaction at the time it occurs. Thereafter, in whatever form the data are collected, the investigator . . . will select and present an abstraction which is necessarily informed by ideas about the nature of theory and explanation imported into the situation. (1983, p. 298)

Fineman and Mangham have highlighted the interactive effects of the relationships among researchers and the participants in a study. A researcher's past history and personality, and the participants' past histories and personalities will all interact in manners impossible to predict at the beginning of a study.

Perhaps the most important implication that Axiom 2 had for this study was in terms of the researcher acknowledging that his beliefs and past experiences related to the education of the urban poor influenced the development of the study. The researcher attempted to "control" for this in three ways. He was diligent in his efforts to, as Dobbert (1984, p. 6) has recommended, "bracket out" his beliefs related to the education of the urban poor in order to effectively focus on gaining an understanding of the social realities that the subjects of the study had created relative to that issue. The second "control" was not really a control at all. It was simply to acknowledge that however talented the researcher was in "bracketing out" his beliefs, he would not be completely successful. Acknowledging that aspect of research allowed for its consideration when collecting and analyzing data. The third control was in the form of a "member check," which is described below under the heading of "Standards of Rigor."

Because the researcher is reasonably well known for his work related to the education of the urban poor, the issue raised by Fineman and Mangham with respect to the interactive effects of the relationships among the researcher and the informants must be considered. If it had resulted in participants providing the information that they believe the researcher wanted to hear, rather than speaking from the point of view of their own constructions of reality, the quality of the study would have been seriously impaired. This problem, of course, is not unique to this study. Spradley, for example, when discussing the nature of the ethnographic interview, noted the difficulty of obtaining "authentic" information when participants perceive the researcher as something more than a researcher. Spradley, however, did not see this as an insurmountable problem. He suggested that researchers can, at least minimize this effect:

> Ethnographers adopt a particular stance toward people with whom they work. By word and by action, in subtle ways and direct statements, they say, "I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them." (1979, p. 34)

During the interviews, the researcher was careful to maintain the stance described by Spradley.

The two aspects of interactivity discussed above have potential to negatively affect the quality of any interpretive study and therefore must be acknowledged and controlled to whatever extent possible. This, however, must not be construed as reflecting a position that interactivity should be controlled altogether. In fact, as Lincoln and Guba have suggested, interactivity provides "opportunities" that can be exploited in interpretive research (1985, p. 101). The fifth of the opportunities they discussed is that "*Meaningful human research is impossible without the full understanding and cooperation of the respondents*" (1985, p. 105). They noted that that condition is likely to obtain only in circumstances when positive reciprocal relationships are established among the researcher and the respondents. Establishing such relationships, of course, is a highly interactive process. The researcher's position, then, was one of acknowledging and to some extent controlling several potentially negative effects of interactivity, but, more generally, taking advantage of the interactivity that is a natural aspect of interpretive research.

Axiom 3: The Possibility of Generalization

> The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual case. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 38)

Interpretive researchers do not seek universal truths, for in a world of constructed social realities subject to the vagaries of human willfulness there can be no such truths. Instead, the goal is one of discovering working hypotheses that seem to describe relationships in a particular setting. Turner outlined the advantages of this view of generalization:

> It promotes the development of theoretical accounts and explanations which conform closely to the situations being observed, so that the theory is likely to be intelligible to, and usable by, those in the situations studied, and is open to comment and correction by them. The theories developed are likely to be complex rather than oversimplified ways of accounting for a complex world, and this quality is likely to enhance their appeal and utility. (1981, p. 227)

An implication for this study is that positions put forth in the final chapters with respect to either policymaking or the education of the urban poor are treated as working hypotheses rather than as absolute truths.

Axiom 4: The Possibility of Causal Linkages

> All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 38)

After arguing at some length and convincingly that a deterministic view of causality is untenable, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 133-151) noted that interpretive researchers "retain a need for *explanation.*" Such researchers achieve this, however, not through the specification of causal relationships, but rather through the explication of "patterns" that emerge among phenomena that are mutually and simultaneously shaping each other. In Lincoln's and Guba's words:

> Many elements are implicated in any given action, and each element interacts with all of the others in ways that change them all while simultaneously resulting in something that we, as outside observers, label as outcomes or effects. But the interaction *has no directionality,* no *need* to produce *that particular outcome* (indeed, the outcome may be a totally unpredictable morphogenetic change); it simply "happened" as a product of the interaction -- the mutual shaping. All elements are involved as "contingently necessary" in the sense that they participate in a synergistic relationship that activates them all. The resulting shaping is, moreover, "circumstances relative" in that there is a plurality of shapers (overdeterminism), with each becoming meaningful in ways that depend on varying circumstances or conditions. (pp. 151-152)

Thus the quest of interpretive research, and therefore of this study, is not for deterministic cause-effect relationships, but for patterns of circumstances that fit together in such a way as to help make sense of the phenomena being studied.

Axiom 5: The Role of Values in Inquiry

> Inquiry is value-bound in at least five ways, captured in the corollaries that follow:
> *Corollary 1:* Inquiries are influenced by *inquirer* values as expressed in the choice of a problem, evaluand, or policy option, and in the framing, bounding, and focusing of that problem, evaluand, or policy option.
> *Corollary 2:* Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the *paradigm* that guides the investigation into the problem.
> *Corollary 3:* Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the

> *substantive theory* utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and in the interpretation of findings.
> *Corollary 4:* Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the *context*.
> *Corollary 5:* With respect to corollaries 1 through 4 above, inquiry is either *value-resonant* (reinforcing or congruent) or *value-dissonant* (conflicting). Problem, evaluand, or policy option, paradigm, theory, and context must exhibit congruence (value-resonance) if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 38)

From the outset, the position that inquiry is necessarily value-bound has been central to the development and conduct of this study. Indeed, the emphasis that has been placed on explicating the researcher's values with respect to the research paradigm, the nature of policy development, and the education of the urban poor, reflects that position.

Summary

This discussion began with the purpose of explicating the researcher's positions with respect to ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the choice of research design and methodology. This was undertaken as a matter of integrity so that readers may incorporate that information in the evaluation of the findings of the study.

To this point, the discussion of research design and methodology has been theoretical and, to some extent, philosophical. The discussion now turns to consideration of the pragmatic means through which those theoretical and philosophical positions were realized.

Methodology

To consider the methodology of a study is to consider the techniques and approaches used for data collection and analysis.

Although interviewing was the primary data gathering technique, some data were also gathered through document analysis and observation. Interviews served to gather data pertaining to individual stakeholders' subjective perspectives on issues related to poverty and education. Documentary analysis contributed data which describe those same issues from a variety of perspectives. Observational data was collected at public meetings (such as school board meetings), at committee meetings in which the researcher was a participant, and at suitable opportunities as they presented themselves.

Since one of the purposes of the interviewing was to obtain "comparable data across subjects" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 136), semi-structured interviews were used. The interview guides (included in Appendix I) were constructed to reflect the research questions, but also to allow opportunities for interviewees to tell their own personal "stories" or express points of view not addressed in the interview guide.

Prior to the interviews, each of the participants was informed of the general nature of the study, and of matters of anonymity and confidentiality. To facilitate an easy transition into the interviews, participants were told of the first two questions prior to turning on the tape recorder. By design, the first question was factual in nature. This further contributed to the comfort level of participants as they began the interviews.

Also by design, the second question was very general and open ended. Participants were asked, "When you think of poverty and education, what comes to mind?" The purpose of this question, was to allow the participants to take control of the direction of the interview. They began to talk about what was important to them about poverty and education. The researcher followed whatever direction they set. His role was one of, reflecting comments back to participants, asking for clarification, or for more information about topics introduced by the participants. Each of the topics they introduced was pursued until the participants had nothing more to say about them. The researcher then returned to the general question, "Is there anything else that comes to your mind when you think of poverty and education." This process of exploring the participants thoughts about poverty and education generally consumed approximately 45 minutes of interviews that lasted, on average, 70 minutes. Only then did the researcher return to the interview guide to determine which areas had not already been addressed. In all of the interviews, by this stage, most of the questions had been addressed. The few that hadn't been, were asked, and the conversation begun again. In response, if participants wandered to another topic related to poverty and education or policymaking, but not directly related to the question asked, their lead was followed. Care was taken throughout the interviews to allow the participants to tell what they believed was important about the education of urban poor children, and about policymaking.

The Participants

The interview respondents were selected through a combination of the "snowball sampling technique" and "purposive sampling" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, pp. 66-67). The stakeholder groups represented among the interviewees included school district trustees, school district senior administrators, and school principals.

The Principals. The process of selecting the principals began with the presentation of the research proposal to the two districts that participated in the study. Each district was asked to identify schools that serve communities in which there is a large proportion of urban poor children. Both districts complied, identifying 13 principals in total. The researcher's condition that the principals to be interviewed have at least one year of experience in their schools reduced this number to 8, all of whom, when contacted, agreed to participate in the study. The three other principals that were interviewed were selected by way of the "snowball sampling" technique. Every interviewee was asked to identify others that could contribute to the study. Principals that were mentioned more than once were contacted and asked to participate. This snowball sampling process resulted in one first-year principal being included in the study. The principal was nominated by three other participants, each of whom expressed high regard for this person's abilities and understanding related to the education of urban poor children. Efforts to identify principal participants ceased when the interviews were no longer introducing new ideas, that is, at the point of data saturation.

Four female and seven male principals were thus selected. Five were principals of elementary schools and six were principals of combined elementary/junior high schools. The principals ranged in age from mid-thirties to late-fifties, and in experience in the principalship from 1/2 year to 19 years. Eight of them had 3 or more years experience as principal of schools which they characterized as serving a large proportion of urban poor children.

The "City of Edmonton: Household Poverty by Census Areas" map, included in Appendix II, confirms that the principals were indeed working in urban poor schools. Seven of the schools represented in this study were located in areas in which between 31% and 40.9% of the population were poor. The other four were in the area in which 41% or more of the population were poor.

The Senior Administrators. The research proposal presented to the two districts that participated in the study included a request for permission to approach senior administrators with invitations to participate in the study. Both districts acceded to that request and provided lists of their senior administrators. All of those identified on the lists were invited to participate, and all accepted. Of the 15 senior administrators thus selected to participate in the study, 5 were from one district, and 10 from the other.

Four of the senior administrators who participated were female and eleven, male. Four were in the first year in their roles, one in the second year, while the remainder varied in experience from two years to seventeen years. Three were superintendents, and twelve were either associate superintendents or area superintendents.

These participants were all closely linked with their districts' formal policymaking processes. They were not, of course, the final decision-makers in matters of policy. That responsibility resided with elected school district trustees. The senior administrators were linked with that process, however, in the sense that they were present in the forums in which policymaking decisions were made. In those forums, they held formal responsibilities pertaining to the linkage between elected public representatives and professional educators. As such, they had many opportunities to influence the nature of policymaking initiatives.

The Trustees. The research proposal presented to the two districts that participated in the study included a request for permission to approach trustees with invitations to participate in the study. Both districts acceded to that request and provided lists of their trustees. All of those identified on the lists (nine from one district, and seven from the other) were invited to participate. Of the 11 trustees that accepted the invitation, 7 were from one district, and 4 from the other. Of the five trustees who did not accept the invitation to participate, two declined due to emergent family matters, and three did not respond to the initial invitation or to either of the follow-up efforts. There did not seem to be any systematic differences between the group of trustees who participated and the group who did not.

The interviews were conducted during the third year of the trustees' three year term for which they were elected. Four of the trustees were in their first term, four in their second, one in her third, and two in their fourth term. Eight were male and three female.

Data Analysis

Miles (1981, p. 590) has noted that "the most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative data is that methods of analysis are not well formulated." He described the process of analysis of qualitative data as a "mysterious, half-formulated art" (p. 593). Miles was reflecting on the inherently creative and intuitive nature of the data analysis process. Even adherence to guidelines such as those set out by Glaser and Strauss (1986) cannot remove the need for much creativity and applied intuition. To this point, Miles wrote:

> Though these (and our other) rules of thumb seemed reasonable and desirable, and reduced anticipatory analysis anxiety a good deal, we found that the actual process of analysis during case-writing was essentially intuitive, primitive, and unmanageable. (1981, p. 597)

This researcher can only concur with Miles. However rational the data analysis process described below may appear to be, the decisions made as to which directions to pursue, which categories were important, and what was important about those categories, were quite often based on informed intuition. That this was so, reinforces the importance of adherence to the "standards of rigor" which are discussed later in this chapter, for they are the major "check" on the extent to which intuition and creativity have been responsibly applied.

The data analysis for this study occurred in two stages; the first, during data collection and the second, after. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) are among the qualitative methodologists who recognize that at least "some analysis must take place during data collection" (p. 146). In this study this served the purposes of identifying potential "categories" into which data could be organized, and of allowing early speculations as to the nature of the relationships among the categories. A record of all of the analysis that occurred during data collection was kept in a "field diary."

The second stage of data analysis occurred after all of the data had been collected. The interviews were tape recorded, then transcribed. Observational data were carefully recorded during the periods of observation, then enhanced immediately following the observations. Documentary data were read carefully, then kept on hand for easy reference. Preliminary thoughts about both observational and documentary data were recorded in the field diary. Thus, both contributed to selecting and defining categories. Generally, however, the observational and documentary data were utilized to serve purposes related to "triangulation." This is discussed below under the heading of "Standards of Rigor." Documentary data also formed the basis for the description, provided in Chapter III, of the context within which the study was conducted.

The interview data presented the greatest challenges during data analysis. Those challenges, however, were made somewhat less daunting through the application of *Factfinder* (Diezmann, 1983), a computer program which proved very useful in organizing and manipulating a great amount of data. The manner in which this phase of the data analysis proceeded is described below. The overall strategy was based on Turner's (1981, pp. 230-242) adaptation of Glaser and Strauss' (1968) nine stages in the development of grounded theory. At the outset, it should be noted that the interview data for each of the stakeholder groups were analyzed separately. That is, the process described below was applied three times, once for the principals' interview data, once for the senior administrators' interview data, and once for the trustees' interview data.

In order to take advantage of *Factfinder*, it was necessary to ensure that the interviews were transcribed in an electronic format readable by that program. Once that had been accomplished, the process of coding the interviews began. The first step was to establish coding categories. In doing so, the following process was applied. Two interviews were carefully read to the purpose of labelling "elements" of meaning that were evident. The field notes related to the stakeholder group in question were then reread for clues about other potential categories. The research questions provided a third source of potential categories. The elements of meaning, or potential categories, that were thus identified were then organized according to relationships that seemed to exist between and among them. For example, student attendance problems, fighting, and defiance of authority, were potential categories that were identified among the principals' interview data. They were organized under the heading of "student behavior." This process resulted in the identification of approximately 60 coding categories for each of the stakeholder groups.

As interviews were being coded, and occasionally even during the writing, some categories were abandoned, and others added. Often, this required recoding all of the interviews, a process which *Factfinder* facilitated quite nicely.

Because *Factfinder* allows for easy manipulation of data once organized into categories, it was very useful in the process of searching for, and testing, themes. Indeed, it proved to be relatively trivial to reorganize data so as to test decisions about possible relationships between and among the categories. This is not to suggest that this step in the data analysis was itself trivial. Indeed, the discovery of themes was the most demanding phase, for it was this phase which required that creativity and intuition be applied in a rigorous fashion.

The themes determined by the process described above are discussed in chapters IV, V, VI. The rigor that was applied to their identification, and to the study in general, is now considered.

Standards of Rigor

The concepts of reliability and validity provide time honored standards for establishing the rigor of quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 289-331) have argued that those concepts do not apply directly to naturalistic inquiry and that, for such research, rigor should be examined in terms of a parallel set of concepts. They propose "credibility" rather than internal validity as a criterion for truth value, "transferability" rather that external validity as a criterion for applicability, "dependability" rather than reliability as a criterion for consistency, and "confirmability" rather than objectivity as a criterion for neutrality (p. 300). Credibility refers to the extent to which findings and interpretations are seen as credible by those who were the sources of the data (p. 296). Transferability refers to the extent to which findings apply in contexts other than the one in which they were derived (p. 297). Dependability refers to the requirement that

> the work of one evaluator (or team) can be tested for consistency by a second evaluator or team, which, after examining the work of the first, can conclude, "Yes, given that perspective and those data, I would probably have reached the same conclusion." (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 124)

The final criterion, confirmability, refers to the extent to which the data used in the study can be confirmed from other sources (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 300). The manner in which these four criteria of rigor were addressed in this study is described below.

Credibility

Two strategies were employed to enhance credibility. The first was "triangulation," which Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 106) noted,

> depends upon exposing a proposition ... to possibly countervailing facts or assertions or verifying such propositions with data drawn from other sources or developed using different methodologies. (pp. 106-107)

Because the documentary data, the interview data, and the observational data often addressed the same issue, but from different perspectives or from the constructed realities of different informants, there were many opportunities for achieving triangulation. For example, when Edmonton Public School District trustees spoke to an information report about preschool programming (Edmonton Public School District, 1989), it was possible to compare the views they expressed about poverty and education at a public board meeting with those they expressed during their interviews. Such opportunities were taken whenever they occurred.

To some extent, triangulation can also be undertaken by readers as they examine Chapters IV, V, and VI. In those chapters, principals, senior administrators, and trustees speak to many of the same issues. This provides an opportunity for readers to personally assess the credibility of the claims made in those chapters.

A "member check" was employed as the second strategy to enhance credibility. Guba and Lincoln noted that this entails "taking data and interpretations to the sources from which they were drawn and asking directly whether they believe -- find plausible -- the results" (1981, p. 110). In this study, five members of each stakeholder group agreed to read an early draft of whichever of chapters IV, V, or VI described their groups' experiences and perceptions of poverty and education. They were asked to address three questions: (1) Do you think the findings accurately reflect your understanding *and/or* the understanding that you perceive other principals [senior administrators, trustees] have relative to poverty and education? (2) Are there important matters that have not been included? and (3) Are there matters that should not have been included?

The researcher met with the principals as a group in order to obtain their feedback. They were unanimous in confirming that the contents of Chapter IV accurately and completely reflected their experiences and perceptions of poverty and education.

Because it was not possible to arrange a meeting date convenient to the five senior administrators, or the five trustees, they agreed to provide their feedback individually. Copies of the relevant chapters were sent to them with covering letters (Appendix III) outlining the questions noted above, and providing a deadline for replies. A response form (Appendix IV), to be returned by mail was also enclosed. A stamped and addressed return envelope was provided. All of the senior administrators and three of the trustees replied. When attempts by telephone to contact the two trustees who did not reply were unsuccessful, each was sent a follow-up letter and another response form (Appendix V). Neither replied to this follow-up.

Generally, the senior administrators and trustees also felt that the chapters they reviewed accurately reflected their experiences and perceptions of poverty and education. They did, however, offer several suggestions, some of which resulted in minor changes to chapters V and VI, and some of which were not acted upon. In either case, reference is made to their comments in the appropriate sections of chapters V and VI. A complete listing of the comments made by senior administrators and trustees in their responses to the member check is provided in Appendix VI.

Transferability

Meeting this criterion requires that the context within which the study is conducted be clearly described. Two components of this study address this issue: (1) Chapter III describes the historical and sociological context, and provides data about the nature and extent of poverty in Alberta; and (2) major sections of chapters IV, V, and VI are devoted to describing key stakeholders' perceptions of the policy environment as it pertained to the education of urban poor children in Edmonton

Dependability

The epistemological underpinnings of interpretive studies, in particular those epistemological positions related to the existence and nature of multiple phenomenological realities, relegate consistency to a position of relatively minor concern. Nevertheless, so as to demonstrate "at least the minimum level of consistency necessary for producing trustworthy data," Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 124) noted that "auditability" can be built into a study.

An audit was conducted as part of this study, and records were be kept in such a way as to facilitate other audits. During the data analysis phase of the study, the researcher met weekly with his advisor to review major decisions that had been, or were being made about themes and categories. Data supporting the decisions were presented and discussed during these meetings.

The "audit trail" exists in *Microsoft Word 3.02* (Microsoft Corporation, 1987) documents on six diskettes readable by Macintosh Plus or later model Macintosh computers. Copies of these diskettes can be obtained from the researcher. The files on the diskettes are labelled according to the themes discussed in Chapters IV, V, and VI. For example, all of the principals' interview data coded as pertaining to the theme of "mandate," can be found on a diskette labelled "Chapter IV: Audit Trial," in a file labelled "mandate."

Confirmability

Through demonstrating that it is a fallacy to suppose that any researcher, "by an act of will or by virtue of clever methodology can rid himself of subjectivity," Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 126) shifted the focus of the criterion of objectivity from the researcher to the data. They argued that from that point of view, the criterion of objectivity is met when the data are confirmable. By this standard, a researcher need only "report his data in such a way that it can be confirmed from other sources if necessary" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 126).

The manner in which data are presented in chapters IV, V, and VI reflects this requirement. The audit was a further check on confirmability, as was the member check.

Assumptions

The major assumption underlying this study is that the issues related to poverty in Edmonton have escalated in severity to the point where they have potential for consideration by educational policymakers. A related assumption is that, the participants interviewed were aware of and had formed opinions with respect to poverty-related issues, and that they expressed those opinions as candidly and accurately as possible.

Delimitations and Limitations

1. The study was delimited to an examination of one urban center. An associated limitation is that the extent to which any of the findings of the study apply in other settings can only be judged by researchers or practitioners in those settings.
2. For practical reasons, the study was delimited to a consideration of school-district level policymaking. The absence of a strong provincial perspective on the issues is a limitation of the study.
3. Interview data were collected over a five month time frame (October, 1988 - February, 1989). The study, therefore, describes circumstances that existed at a "point in time." This limits the certainty with which findings could be applied at other points in time.
4. The study focuses on only one substantive issue in the policy realm. This impairs the ability to make inferences with respect to the general nature of the policymaking process.
5. Principals of only eleven of the urban poor schools in Edmonton were interviewed. The findings in Chapter IV, therefore, apply most directly to only those eleven schools.

6. In order to gain access to the districts involved in the study, it was necessary to guarantee that individual districts would neither be identifiable nor compared in the final report. Cross district comparisons were, therefore, not possible.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has introduced the study, presented a rationale for its significance, and discussed in detail, matters related to research design and methodology. The next chapter presents a review of literature pertaining to the earliest stages of policymaking. The "conceptual map" which guided data collection is discussed in the same chapter.

The third chapter sets the historical and theoretical context necessary for a study of the development of educational poverty policies. Poverty theories, the American "War on Poverty," the role of education in combatting poverty, and the nature and extent of poverty in Alberta are discussed.

Chapter IV presents the experiences and perceptions of principals related to poverty and education; Chapter V, those of the senior administrators; and Chapter VI, those of the trustees.

Through an examination of relationships within and among the perspectives of principals, senior administrators, and trustees on poverty and education, Chapter VII presents a discussion of factors that influenced the extent to which policymakers were motivated to initiate the development of educational poverty policies.

Chapter VIII outlines conclusions warranted by the data analysis and discussion presented in earlier chapters. The final chapter presents reflections on the potential for social action to influence the development of educational poverty policies.

CHAPTER II

TRANSFORMING POLICY ISSUES: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, issues related to urban poverty have received only minor consideration among Alberta's educational policymakers. The past several years, however, have seen developments which have brought the issues under public scrutiny and thus into the arena of public policymaking. Recent media attention to such matters as the minimum wage, foodbanks, welfare, and hunger in schools is indicative of that trend.

Although formal policies have not been enacted in response to those developments, the issues have been discussed in the Legislature and at formal meetings of the two largest urban school boards in Alberta (Edmonton Public Schools, 1987; Province of Alberta, April 7, 1988; Sunday Herald, March 27, 1988). Even this small amount of evidence suggests that poverty is emerging as an issue for consideration in educational policymaking, and thus is a suitable subject for a policy study.

This chapter serves the purpose of setting a theoretical context for the study through a review of relevant policy literature. The review, then, is delimited to a consideration of only the earliest stages of the policymaking process; those that precede decisions to enact policy. Dunn (1981) has labelled this the "problem structuring" phase, while Dror (1971, p. 98) referred to "issue formulation and problem taxonomy." Both authors noted that very little theoretical work has been done relative to this phase of policymaking. Dunn, for example, wrote:

> Problem structuring, which is the phase in the process of enquiry where analysts grope toward possible definitions of a problematic situation is no doubt the most crucial, but least understood aspect of policy analysis. (p. 98)

In a similar vein, Dror (p. 98) identified this as one of the major areas in which there is need for research. Of course, a concomitant of there being very little work in the area is that there is also very little literature that pertains directly to problem structuring. Nevertheless, what does exist can serve as a framework for synthesizing relevant information from the general policy literature.

Transforming Policy Issues

In reference to the nature of policy issues, Coates (1978) wrote:

> A public policy issue may be defined as a fundamental enduring conflict among or between objectives, goals, customs, plans, activities or stakeholders, which is not likely to be resolved completely in favor of any polar position in that conflict. The necessarily temporary resolution of issues by a public policy is likely over long periods of time to move closer to favoring one pole over another. Thus, the crucial question facing public policy in any given time is striking a fresh balance among conflicting forces. (p. 37)

If this is indeed the nature of public policy, then the matter to be considered here is the process through which potential policy issues are transformed into formal problems which, when addressed in policy, are instrumental in creating that "fresh balance." Dunn (1981) noted that policy issues and problems are related in the sense that:

> Policy issues not only involve disagreements about actual or potential courses of action; they also reflect competing views of the nature of problems themselves. Policy issues are therefore the result of prior disputes about the definition, classification, explanation, and evaluation of a problem. (p. 101)

With respect to the study in question, this suggests that the manner in which various key stakeholders define, classify, explain, and evaluate poverty in Alberta will significantly affect the transformation of that issue into formal problems. In Dunn's words, "The formulation of a problem is heavily influenced by the assumptions that different policy stakeholders ... bring to a given problematic situation" (p. 101). Policy problems do not consist of only objective circumstances; personal subjective impressions play a major role. This matter -- the nature of the relationship between subjective and objective realities --

because it is of some consequence for this study, is examined in more detail later in this chapter.

Dunn's (1981, pp. 103-106) system of classification of problems as well-structured, moderately structured, or ill-structured provides more useful information about the nature of the potential policy problems related to poverty. With respect to these classes, he wrote:

> Whereas well-structured and moderately structured problems reflect consensus, the main characteristic of ill-structured problems is conflict among competing goals. Policy alternatives and their outcomes may also be unknown, such that estimates of risk and uncertainty are not possible. The problem of choice is not to uncover known deterministic relations, or to calculate the risk of uncertainty attached to policy alternatives, but rather to define the nature of the problem. (p. 105)

Even with that limited description of the classification system, it would be difficult to argue that the problems related to poverty are other than ill-structured. There seems to be little consensus either about the nature of those problems or about what can be done about them. A major task for this policy study, then, was to explicate the nature of the problems as they were perceived by relevant stakeholders. Dunn (1981, p. 106) noted five factors pertaining to ill-structured problems that complicated that task:

> 1. There are no generally agreed upon societal values (utilities), only those of particular individuals and groups. Values often conflict, making it difficult or impossible to compare and weigh multiple conflicting goals and objectives.
> 2. Policy makers tend to maximize their own values and are not motivated to act on the basis of societal preferences. In maximizing their own values policymakers satisfy immediate demands for a solution, rather than compare and weigh the consequences of a large range of policy alternatives.
> 3. The commitment of resources to existing policies and programs prevents policymakers from considering new and creative alternatives since previous decisions limit or foreclose present options.
> 4. The time and effort required to collect relevant information on all possible alternatives is costly so that a major question is when to stop the search for new information.

> 5. Policymakers and policy analysts are frequently unable to predict the range of positive and negative consequences associated with each policy alternative. This tends to result in the choice of courses of action that differ only marginally from the status quo. (p. 106)

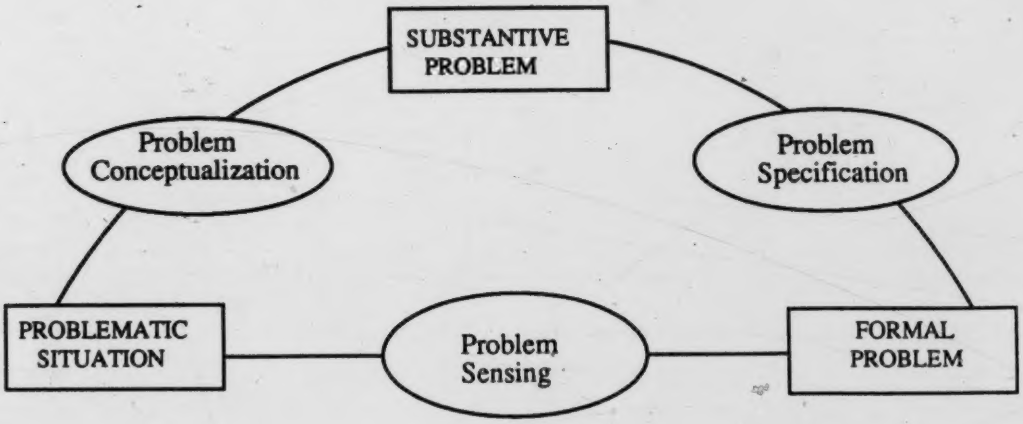
These complicating factors required that the study include an examination of stakeholders' values, their commitment to existing programs, the nature of the information they bring to bear on the problems, and their beliefs in the efficacy of alternative courses of action.

To this point, those aspects related to the nature of policy issues and problems which have consequences for the study of poverty as a potential policy issue have been identified. In a sense, this set the parameters for the conduct of the study. The chapter now turns to a consideration of two models, one proposed by Dunn (1981, p. 107) and the other by Richmond and Kotelchuck (1983, p. 387) that, when enriched with relevant information from the general policy literature, served as a conceptual map to guide the study.

Problem Structuring Model

Dunn (1981, p. 107) has developed a structural model (Figure 1) which identifies stages through which a policy issue may pass as it is transformed into formal problems. The model specifies three "distinguishable but interdependent" stages of problem structuring: problem sensing, problem conceptualization, and problem specification (p. 107). Problem sensing is a matter of the perceptions of individuals. The dynamics of that stage may lead to the "recognition or felt existence" of a problematic situation. Problem conceptualization refers to the process of applying ordinary language to an analysis of the problematic situation in such a way as to define a substantive problem. The process of problem specification requires a careful study of the problem so as to "define the nature of the problem itself" (Dunn, 1981, p. 109). Once the formal problem has been defined, the policymaking process can shift to a consideration of alternatives for problem solution.

Figure 1 -- The Subprocess of Problem Structuring


SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEM
Problem Conceptualization
Problem Specification
PROBLEMATIC SITUATION
Problem Sensing
FORMAL PROBLEM

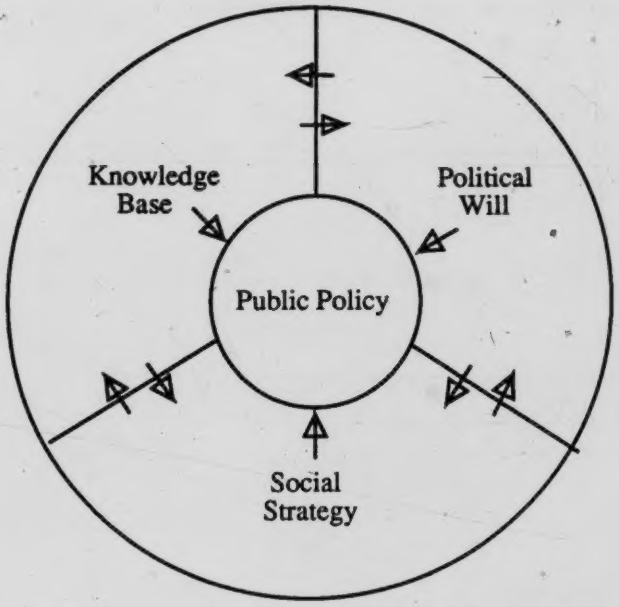
(adapted from Dunn, 1981, p. 107)

Conceptual Model

Whereas Dunn's is a structural model, Richmond and Kotelchuck's is conceptual in nature (Figure 2). They argued (1984, p. 207) that "three factors are necessary to influence public policy: the development of a knowledge base, the development of political will, and the development of social strategy." Richmond and Kotelchuck defined these factors as follows:

> 1. A knowledge base provides the scientific and administrative data base upon which to make public health and education program decisions.
>
> 2. Political will is society's desire and commitment to support or modify old programs or to develop new programs.
>
> 3. Social strategy is a blueprint for how we are going to accomplish the worthwhile goals that we have established.
>
> (1984, pp. 207-208)

Figure 2 -- Three-Factor Approach to Public Policy



(adapted from Richmond and Kotelchuck, 1983, p. 387)

In a sense, the two models described above can be seen as operating on different "planes." Dunn's model describes the stages involved in the problem structuring process, while Richmond and Kotelchuck's is concerned with the nature of the extant policy environment as the process moves through those stages.

Because, as noted earlier, very little theoretical or empirical work has been done with respect to the problem structuring stage of policy development, there is very little literature that can contribute to an understanding of Dunn's model. It must stand on its own, supported only by Dunn (1981, pp. 97-109) himself. That is not true of the Three-Factor Model proposed by Richmond and Kotelchuck. There is a large body of literature pertaining to each of the factors, particularly to "knowledge base" and "political will." In order to further clarify the nature of the conceptual map that guided the study, each of those factors are now discussed.

Knowledge Use in Policymaking

Dunn (1981) has defined policy analysis as:

> *an applied social science discipline which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve policy problems*. (p. 35)

Implicit within that definition is an assumption that the information generated through policy analysis will be used in the policymaking process. The question of whether and to what extent that is true is, therefore, of great moment for policy analysts.

The Extent and Nature of Knowledge Use

Much of the literature that addresses the question raised above presents a very pessimistic picture. Schneider, Stevens, and Tornatzky (1982), for example, based on their review of 181 randomly selected articles from policy journals, concluded:

> The use of research findings for specific problem solving is quite rare, with findings more likely to be employed as "political ammunition" or be used to conceptualize a problem in a different way. (p. 100)

In support of this conclusion, they noted that their data suggest that policymakers are not only more likely to refer to the mass media than to experts or to research findings, but that some policymakers "reported *never* using scientific information, even in areas where scientific data are readily available" (p. 101). Schneider, Stevens, and Tornatzky (1982, p. 100) and Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980, p. 25) referred to this phenomenon as the propensity of policymakers to use "soft" rather than "hard" information. On the basis of his study of the memoirs of prominent retired policymakers, Hammond (1978) made a similar observation:

> Policy makers who write their memoirs often take pains to point out how whimsical the policy making process is. Somehow *after* retirement they appear to feel duty-bound to disabuse us of the false notion that anything better than the incompetent, intuitive, chaotic Mode 6 [intuitive thought] is put to work in high circles, although their pronouncements *before* retirement

> would have us believe that the use of anything less than the pure analytical thought of Mode 1 would be regarded with disdain. (p. 22)

This paints a very different picture with respect to the extent of information use than that to which policy analysts might aspire. In summarizing this point, Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) noted the resultant disillusionment of policy analysts:

> There is a sizable literature that, with minor differences in shading and emotional overtone, echoes the words of a disillusioned participant in the enterprise of conveying social science research to government decision makers: "The first and most important observation I derive from these experiences is that only rarely have I witnessed serious governmental attention being given to serious social science research." (p. 3)

Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) took this rather pessimistic view as the central problem of their large scale interview study of 155 policymakers, 50 members of research review committees, and 50 social scientists, all working in the mental health field. Their conclusions were both more encouraging and more realistic than the position described above. They demonstrated that the position that research is seldom used in policymaking is an overstatement based in large part on a misconception of what it means for research to be used in policymaking (pp. 9-13). With respect to this misconception, Weiss and Bucuvalas wrote:

> The imagery of research use that undergirds the disillusionment of observers appears to be the direct and immediate application of the results of a social science research study to a particular decision. ... Research makes a difference in this formulation, only if it changes a decision from what it would have been had there been no research to one fully in accord with what the research results imply should be done. The "use of research" is thus discernible, clear to the naked eye. (p. 10)

They felt that the definition of when research is being used should be expanded to include circumstances when research: (1) reinforces the commitment of officials to a decision, reduces their uncertainty, or silences critics (p. 10); (2) influences which issues are placed on the policy agenda (p. 11); (3) results in a change in the level and nature of discussion relative to a policy issue (p. 264); and (4) contributes to the conceptual development of policymakers (p. 263). The last of these points may well reflect the most common and significant means by which social science research contributes to policymaking. Reflecting on this, Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) wrote:

> The process of using research shades into what we commonly think of as "learning." There seems to be a continuum, with direct application of specific findings to a single decision at one end and a diffuse gain (or change) in understanding at the other. ... When it [research] diffuses through an agency, either directly through the printed word or through the intervention of consultants, experts, professional groups, client advocates, media publicity, presidential-level advisers, influential conferences, training sessions, or any other channel or combination of channels, it can contribute to organizational learning. And in time, it may have powerful effects on which aspect of an issue the agency faces and the nature of the responses it undertakes. (pp. 264-265)

This conceptualization of research use in policymaking adds an interesting perspective to the consideration of the role of information use in determining whether a particular issue will be the subject of policy. That, of course, is the necessity to consider, not only, whether stakeholders are being directly informed by research, but also to consider whether and to what extent the positions they take have been affected by the gradual accumulation of knowledge due to long term exposure to research.

The Subjective Nature of Knowledge

The arguments presented above raise serious doubts about the extent to which "objective" knowledge affects policymaking. It would seem that, most often, objective knowledge is filtered through key policymakers' idiosyncratic and phenomenological processes of learning. The ability of key stakeholders to select and interpret objective knowledge also needs to be considered. Edwards (1978) noted the complications that obtain from that circumstance:

> Policy is not made in a problem-oriented vacuum. Instead, it is made in an embattled arena, usually by a man or an organization upon whom are focused the efforts of a wide variety of conflicting stake holders, each having his own perception of

> both problems and issues -- often with his own collection of "facts" to back up that perception. (p. 70)

In pursuing a similar line of thought, Dunn (1981, p. 97) noted that various stakeholders interpret objective information differently. This, he suggested,

> is not so much because the facts of the matter are inconsistent (and often they are), but because policy analysts, policymakers, and other stakeholders hold competing assumptions about human nature, government, and opportunities for social change through public action. In an important sense policy problems are in the eye of the beholder. (p. 97)

For each key stakeholder, then, the information that is brought to bear on a policy issue is not whatever "objective" knowledge exists, but it is their own phenomenological reconstruction of that knowledge. Studies of policy issues, therefore, must be concerned with more than objective data; they must also be concerned with stakeholders' subjective views with respect to the saliency and meaning of any information those stakeholders choose to consider as relevant to the issue.

The Role of Social Strategies in Policymaking

Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984, p. 207) have noted that the development or the existence of a social strategy that stakeholders perceive to be effective is a prerequisite to public policymaking. The first point to be made with respect to the nature and extent of the influence of social strategies is that much of what has been written above in reference to the nature and extent of the influence of research applies equally well here. This is so because most of the literature to which reference was made in the above discussion of research use does not distinguish between research aimed at generating knowledge about policy issues and research aimed at assessing various social strategies. If, then, it is valid to apply the conclusions arrived at in that earlier discussion, it follows that research concerned with effective social strategies for dealing with a particular policy issue may not have a direct effect on policymaking. The individual phenomenological perspectives and beliefs of key stakeholders with respect to what social strategies might be effective in dealing with the issue will be much more important. Indeed, the influence of research may be even more problematic when the subject is selection of appropriate social strategies. Hammond (1978), for example, noted:

> Statistical records remain records of what *has* happened, and policymakers need to know what *will* happen. Conventional statistical analysis does not provide assistance in ascertaining cause and effect, and that is what policymakers need to know; what will happen if this course of action is taken than that one. (p. 17)

That the link between research and the selection or development of a social strategy is tenuous does not reduce the importance of this factor for policymaking. Weiss (1982) asserted this position clearly:

> Not infrequently, the solution precedes the identification of the problem. In fact, it can be argued that unless a plausible solution is envisioned, the issue will not be identified as a problem. It will be considered a 'condition' that has to be endured, like death, the weather, and (for many centuries) poverty. (p. 297)

For studies of policy issues, this highlights the need to determine whether key stakeholders in the policymaking process have knowledge of social strategies that they believe will be effective in dealing with the issues.

The Role of Political Will in Policymaking

Many of the authors who write about policymaking comment on the balance of relative influence between knowledge (of facts and social strategies) and political considerations in determining policy. Indeed, there may well be consensus with respect to that issue. Policymakers' command of appropriate knowledge, it seems, is a necessary condition for policy development, but it is not sufficient. Whether a policy initiative will be undertaken hinges on political considerations (Boyd, 1988, p. 517; Dror, 1983, p. 166; Dunn, [illegible]81, p. 352; Green. p. 4; Lamm, p. 3; Lutz, p. 30; and Weiss, 1982, p. 301).

That politics plays such a crucial role may explain the problematic nature of research use in policymaking. In Dunn's (1981) words:

> The distinction between two aspects of policy processes -- the cognitive and the political -- is critical for understanding the utilization, underutilization, and nonutilization of performance information. The utilization of information produced by any of the policy-analytic methods ... is significantly shaped by factors that are political, organizational, and social, and not merely methodological in nature. (pp. 352-353)

In making a similar point, Green (1978) identified two factors that seem to shape the extent and nature of the political will to act on a particular policy issue:

> The theory of policy decision, as opposed to the theory of policy choice, is a straight forward theory of political behavior and of social values. Policy decision is an extension of moral philosophy. And this theory of political behavior or of moral philosophy is what the policy decider must appeal to in deciding. (pp. 4-5)

Thus, Green asserted that political will is determined by a conflation of political and value considerations. His position is well supported in the literature. Coates (1978, p. 57), Dror (1971, p. 59), and Lamm (1978, p. 3) are among those who note that political considerations often create tensions that constrain the effectiveness of policymaking. Lamm (1978), for example, wrote:

> The policymaker in elective office is constantly faced with a classical dilemma -- he sees the need for dynamic new policies but questions his political survivability if he proposes them. Whatever pretensions of courage he claims, he is caught between what he knows to be necessary and what he thinks will be accepted politically. (p. 3)

Support for values being an important factor in the policy decision matrix can be found in Coates (1978, p. 38), Dror (1971, p. 58), Dror (1983, p. 166), and Edwards (1978, p. 85). That values do impinge upon the process, explains the existence of the dilemma to which Lamm referred. Policymakers must resolve the tensions between their utilitarian political motives and whatever values they hold other than political survival. The political will of policymakers to act on an issue will depend both upon the extent to which that dilemma exists with respect to the issue and upon the manner in which the policymakers choose to resolve the dilemma. This suggests that studies of potential policy issues must consider whether and to what extent the dilemma exists with respect to the issues in question. This requires the examination of both values and political influences.

Values

In his discussion of "metapolicymaking," Dror (1983) addressed the manner in which values enter into policymaking decisions. He considered both social values and personal values. With respect to social values he wrote:

> The value-processing phase is highly influenced by political processes, which determine the values that should be realized by public policy. Values are processed mainly by means of interactions and collisions between political bodies, public organizations, and interest groups. The outcome depends largely on the relative power, involvement, and commitment of the different interest groups, on the policymakers' image of the "public interest" and on the various personal and organizational characteristics of the main policymakers.

Social values, then, are included in policymaking through the political process, a consideration of which follows this discussion of values. Values held by individuals may be affected by the political process, but they are not determined in that arena alone. Value structures are personal phenomenological entities, the subtleties of which may not be understood even by the individuals holding them. As Dror (1983) has stated, such value structures depend, to a large extent, on subjective images of reality constructed by individuals. He noted the interplay between values and subjective realities:

> Since policymakers, like all men, must operate in terms of their subjective images of reality, rather than in terms of objective reality, the quality of their policymaking must partly depend on how they select the facts from which they construct their subjective images. For one thing, the selecting process is influenced by values and preconceptions, by whether a particular fact seems significant in terms of the values and preconceptions one already holds. (p. 167)

Thus the phenomenological value structures of individual policymakers assume great significance for studies of potential policy issues. Such studies must attempt to identify what values key policymakers bring to bear in their evaluations of the issues.

Political Influences

That politics play a central role in determining the extent to which the political will to engage in policymaking exists, has already been argued. What remains is to discuss the manner in which this influence occurs. Within the policy literature, two themes emerge with respect to that issue. The first is that the political influence of bureaucrats can have major consequences for policy. Paltiel (1982), for example, commenting on the relative decline of the power of elected officials, referred to:

> the shift of power and authority to the political executive in the form of the cabinet, and on the increasingly salient role of the bureaucracy, especially at its senior levels in ministerial departments. (p. 199)

Lutz (1977, p. 38), in making a similar point, noted that much of the power of the bureaucracy relates to its "ability to control the agenda, thus preventing issues from becoming issues". This perspective is most frequently found in "neo-Marxist" literature (Paltiel, 1982, p. 199). Writers associated with other political ideologies tend to present a more balanced view of the influence of the bureaucracy. Coates (1978), for example argued:

> Bureaucrats and only to a lesser extent legislators and political figures, irrespective of the level of government, have to respond to interest group pressures and to the ineluctable political calendar that cuts their world into temporal pieces. (p. 57)

From this perspective, the electoral process and interest group activities are the major sources of political influence on policymaking. This links nicely with the second major "political" theme that can be found in the policy literature. That theme relates to the nature and extent of the influence of interest groups in the policymaking process.

Almond and Powell (1978, p. 170) defined an interest group as "a set of individuals who are linked by bonds of concern or advantage and who are aware of these shared interests." The extent to which such groups influence policy seems to have evolved to the point where pressure by interest groups is now thought to be, by far, the most significant determinant of public policy (Almond and Powell, 1978; Paltiel, 1982; Townsend & Bridgeland, 1985; and Weiss, 1982). In his discussion of this phenomenon, Paltiel (1982) wrote:

> A general theory of the Canadian pressure system must begin by viewing interest groups as something more than mere passive clienteles, conveyors of information, or instruments of social control; but it must go on to explore the explosive consequences of escalating interest group demands and competition. (p. 203)

Paltiel and the other authors mentioned above leave little doubt that in present day policymaking interest groups play a crucial role. With respect any potential policy issue their efforts are likely to be the major determinants of whether and to what extent the political will to engage in policymaking exists. Studies of such issues, therefore, must determine which, if any, interest groups are extending efforts to influence the issues, then assess the nature and extent of that influence.

The Conceptual Map

Prior to the discussion of the three factors contained in Richmond and Kotelchuck's public policy model, it was noted that the purpose of undertaking the discussion was to clarify the nature of the conceptual map that guided this study. The wording "conceptual map" was borrowed from Brunner (1982) who offered the following definition:

> Conceptual maps are used as general heuristics. They suggest what to look for and how to proceed, without prejudging what factors will turn out to be most important in any particular context. Properly designed, they can be used by the policy scientist to guide the focus of attention systematically, comprehensively and efficiently within the available constraints of time and other resources. To do otherwise ignores the complexity of the environment and the role of the analyst's own perspective in developing a reasonable response to it. (p. 128)

The purpose of the above literature review, then, was not to generate hypotheses to be tested, nor even to develop specific questions to be answered; it was simply to guide the enquiry. Accordingly, areas to investigate were identified, but no conjecture as to what would be found was made. The conceptual map developed through the literature review suggested that the study should examine:

1. the role of information generated through formal research,
2. both "objective" information and stakeholders' subjective views with respect to the saliency of any information those stakeholders choose to consider as relevant to the issue,
3. whether key stakeholders have knowledge of social strategies that they believe would be effective in dealing with the issue,
4. the values that policymakers bring to bear on the issue,
5. the role of bureaucrats with respect to the development of the political will to act on the issue, and
6. the role of interest groups with respect to the development of the political will to act on the issue.

This conceptual map proved to be very useful in leading the study towards the identification of major factors that contributed to the level at which issues related to poverty were being considered as potential foci for policymaking. It also allowed consideration of the dynamic nature of the problem structuring process with respect to the transformation of poverty issues into policy problems.

CHAPTER III

POVERTY AND SOCIAL POLICY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter serves the purpose of defining the theoretical and historical context within which contemporary policymaking related to poverty and education occurs. In pursuing that purpose, four general themes are explored: (1) theoretical perspectives that have been applied to understanding the nature of poverty in Western society, (2) the American War on Poverty, (3) education and the fight against poverty, and (4) poverty in Edmonton.

Poverty Theories

In writing "our *definitions* of the poor are implicitly policy statements" Miller and Bloomberg (1970, p. 27) were noting that the beliefs or *theories* which policymakers hold with respect to the nature and causes of poverty will, to a large extent, determine the substance of the policies that they will recommend or support. Although over history a variety of such theories have driven policymaking, Waxman (1983) has argued that currently there are among "sociologists and policymakers two major conceptualizations and explanations of poverty, one known as the cultural perspective and the other as the situational perspective." In *The Stigma of Poverty: A Critique of Poverty Theories and Policies,* Waxman (1983) systematically demonstrated that extant policies can be understood from one or the other of the perspectives, then proposed an alternative concep[illegible]lization which he suggested could lead to more promising policies. The remai[illegible]f this section of this chapter is devoted to providing a brief historical view of poverty policies and their underlying theories as presented in Waxman (1983, pp. 74-92), then examining the cultural and situational perspectives as well as Waxman's alternative formulation which he has labelled the "relational perspective" (p. 69).

Historical Perspectives

Waxman (1983, p. 74) observed that, in Western culture, the history of formal poverty policies began with the fourteenth century Poor Laws of England. Prior to that time, the poor were the sole responsibility of the church, in which circumstances the status of the poor had devalued from one of being revered as of the highest moral order to one of very low status. The initial position perhaps reflects the biblical representation of the poor as being blessed in their having forsaken worldly goods in the service of God, while the final position reflects the growth of negative societal reaction to begging and criminal behavior among the poor. Waxman (1983) assigned responsibility for the British government's having intervened during the fourteenth century to the negative societal reaction noted above:

> When the government intervened in the mid-fourteenth century, it did so not so much out of concern for the condition of the poor on their own account, but rather out of concern for the dominant non-poor. The immediate cause of concern was the result of the growing problem of maintaining security. (p. 75)

Waxman then cited Jordan (1959, p. 77) to support his claim that until well into the sixteenth century, developments in the Poor Laws reflected that same concern:

> It may be safely said that the steady concern of the Tudors with the problem of poverty flowed from the almost obsessive preoccupation of these great rulers with the question of public order. Henry VII, his son, and his granddaughter all shared an intuitive sensitivity in this matter and were quick to lash out when the slightest threat to public security appeared in any part of the realm. This concern was surely part of their jealous conception of the meaning of sovereignty and their abiding resolution to secure the realm and their throne from the chronic disorder of the preceding century. We may well believe that these monarchs were not moved by sentiments of piety or of pity as they resolutely addressed themselves to the problem of poverty, but they were at the same time deeply persuaded that unrelieved and uncontrolled poverty was the most fertile breeding ground for local disorders which might be a kind of social contagion flame across the whole realm. Hence it was that the immense power of the Crown was steadily addressed to the problem of poverty. (pp. 76-77)

Thus the first Western poverty policies were not motivated by a concern for social justice for the poor, but rather by a concern for social order. Implicit in this position is a view of the poor as being, in Waxman's terms, "morally defective" (p. 77). Simply stated, the view was that the poor, through their idleness or weak moral fibre, were architects of their own circumstances which they could alter if they so chose. It is not surprising, then, that poverty policies enacted from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century were extremely repressive, for as Waxman (1983) noted, such policies are congruent with a view of the poor as being morally defective:

> [T]he persistent call for repressive policies to deal with the poor is often legitimized by their alleged inherent moral defectiveness, and by the belief that they will only cease to be morally defective when they are "purified" through the process of forced rigid resocialization which is the objective of the harsh repression. (p. 77)

Waxman (1983) demonstrated the repressive nature of the poverty policies of this period through a discussion of major legislative developments which pertained to the poor. Two of his examples are sufficient to illustrate his point:

1. The 1349 *Statutes of Laborers* "forbade giving alms to 'valient beggars' who 'refuse to labor, giving themselves to theft and other abominations' " (de Schweinitz, 1961 cited in Waxman, 1983, p. 77). That act was made even more repressive through its 1351 and 1388 amendments which "restricted the geographic mobility of servants and laborers" (Waxman, 1983, p. 77).
2. Legislation in 1531 established a "means test" to determine the right to beg and defined the areas in which the poor could beg. Waxman (1983, p. 78) noted that under this legislation "vagrants were whipped and unlicensed poor were heavily fined."

Legislation of this period, then, established definitions for the "deserving poor" and the "undeserving poor," with the undeserving poor receiving very harsh treatment. Lest this be mistaken for a move toward humanitarian policies, at least for the deserving poor, it should be noted that the application of the legislation was confounded by "the stubbornly held persuasion that there were no genuinely unemployed poor and the vagrancy could be driven from the realm by the application of the criminal law" (Jordan, 1959 cited in Waxman, 1983, p.78). It seems that the repressive policies enacted to deal with vagrants were applied more or less generally to all poor.

Although after the sixteenth century, the issue of poverty in Britain may no longer have been closely associated with a concern for national security, the view of poverty that was generated by that concern (and the resulting policies enacted during the three previous centuries) was well established and continued to influence policymaking up to and including most of the nineteenth century. Waxman (1983) provided examples such as the following to demonstrate that the Poor Laws continued to be extremely repressive due to the prevailing societal view of the poor as being morally defective:

1. The 1662 amendment of the Poor Laws "empowered the local authorities to return any individual who *might someday* apply for relief to his former residence" (Waxman, 1983, p. 79). That provision was in force until 1795 when a further amendment specified that only those who actually applied for relief could be relocated.
2. 1772 saw the establishment of workhouses in which "men, women, and children who received relief were forced to eat, sleep, and work" (Waxman, 1983, p. 79). Waxman also noted that the rules of the workhouses were very rigid and that violators might be sent to the stocks, not fed, or confined to the workhouse.
3. During the early nineteenth century, William Townsend's view that Darwin's principle of natural selection should be applied to society began to have a great impact on public thought. This concept, which came to be known as "Social Darwinism" was most clearly reflected in the Poor Laws of 1834 which introduced the "doctrine of less eligibility" (Waxman, 1983, p. 82). Waxman (1983) described the manner in which that principle was applied:

> The doctrine of less eligibility meant that persons on relief should be kept in a condition necessarily worse than that of the lowest paid worker not on relief, the objective being to make relief undesirable and to provide the recipient with a clear and strong incentive to get off the relief rolls. To this end, the Act of 1834 created a central body of Poor Law Commissioners which organized and oversaw all of the local Boards of Guardians, ordered each local Board to build a workhouse, and ruled that no person would receive relief unless he agreed to enter the workhouse, where the "deserving poor" could be separated from the lazy and indolent. The workhouse was, in effect, a prison (although anyone could leave if he so wished), in that all "inmates" of the workhouse lost their rights of citizenship (if they had previously had them), were required to wear distinctive workhouse clothing, were required to do menial tasks, and were separated from their families (the whole nuclear family was required to enter the workhouse, but men, women, and children were all separated from each other; only infants younger than three years were allowed to be with their mothers). (pp. 82-83)

This may have been the most Draconian of all of the Poor Laws. The harsh treatment that those laws allowed was intended to force the poor, who were viewed as moral degenerates exclusively responsible for their circumstances, to extricate themselves from poverty. Waxman (1983, p. 88) cited Woodroofe (1966) to support his assertion that Britain's approaches to poverty policy, including the principle of less eligibility were adopted in North America during the nineteenth century:

> Transferred from the Poor Laws of England to this land of abundance, the ideology of scarcity persisted till well into the twentieth century. It set great store on public pennypinching; it assumed that human nature was bad; it took for granted the necessity for a means test to prove destitution, and claimed that, even if a recipient of relief paid the price in humiliation and loss of civil rights, the help granted him must be minimal, local and deterrent.

In fact, the view described by Woodroofe dominated policymaking in both Britain and North America well into the twentieth century. Waxman (1983) suggested that a shift from that position did not occur until during the 1930's when governments were beginning to acknowledge that poverty was "a public, governmental responsibility rather than a private or voluntary one" (p. 90). This, combined with an increase in the status of the study of sociology and social workers adopting sociology as their central discipline, resulted in a major shift in beliefs about poverty. The position that the nature of society is a critical factor in determining whether any individual will become or remain poor gained public acceptance and began to be reflected in poverty policies. The notion of a "culture of poverty" was spawned in this period (Waxman, 1983, pp. 89-91).

The influence of sociology on the development of poverty policies has been maintained up to the present and has provided the theoretical bases for both Waxman's "cultural perspective" and his "situational perspective" which respectively are the subjects of the next two sections of this chapter.

The Cultural Perspective

Waxman (1983) defined the cultural perspective in the following manner:

> According to the cultural perspective on poverty, the lower class is seen as manifesting patterns of behavior and values which are characteristically different from those of the dominant society and culture. Moreover, according to the culturists, these unique patterns of behavior and values are transmitted intergenerationally through socialization and have become the subcultural *determinants* of the lower socioeconomic status of the poor. (p. 7)

This view, then, holds that the cultural values and norms of the poor lead to their being "trapped" in poverty. Waxman argued that, from the cultural perspective, this is because many behaviors that are defined as anti-social by the mainstream culture are accepted norms among the poor (1983, pp. 7-25). He noted that this is reflected in the manner in which culturalists have explained generally high crime rates, high illegitimate birth rates, high rates of mental illness, and low educational achievement among the poor. Culturalists contend that these and similar culturally determined behaviors exclude the poor from access to mainstream society.

It is important to note that from this perspective, although the causes of poverty may be based in society in the form of the culture of poverty, the problems in need of remediation are internal to the individuals who are the poor. In order to overcome poverty, the poor will need to be taught the values, norms, and behaviors of the mainstream society. Waxman (1983) observed that most modern poverty polices reflect this position. He noted, for example:

> Almost the entire field of social work until recently, and especially the social casework approach, was predicated upon a cultural perspective in which the problems of the poor are seen as deriving from internal sources. The notion of "helping the poor to help themselves" implies, basically, that the poor have to be changed to fit the system, which is, again implicitly, sound. In this line of reasoning, the poor can only hope to improve their lot by adopting the values and patterns of behavior of the non-poor. Helping the poor means helping them to think and behave "properly." In order to accomplish this monumental task of changing the poor, drastic measures may be required. Thus, for example, the Job Corps, one of the components of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the "War on Poverty," which was addressed to the area of employment, was designed to offer a basic education and marketable skills to its enrollees. It was, however, based upon a rigid version of the cultural perspective, for it assumed that the youth had to be removed from his ("vicious") environment if the training program was to be effective. (p. 25)

Waxman (1983, pp. 25-26) also noted that the American Project Head Start preschool initiatives were based on the same view of the poor. Those programs were founded on the belief that the necessary changes among the poor could be best accomplished through very early contact with the children of the poor.

The two major tenets of the cultural perspective, then, are (1) that there is a culture of poverty which entraps the poor, and (2) that the values, beliefs, and norms of the poor which they have developed through exposure to that culture of poverty must be changed to those of mainstream society if they are to become productive citizens.

The Situational Perspective

In defining the situational perspective, Waxman (1983) noted the differences between it and the cultural perspective:

> In contrast to the cultural perspective, there is the alternative situational or structural perspective according to which the poor are viewed in a very different light. Granting that the poor do

> manifest statistically unique patterns of behavior, the situationalist argues that these derive not internally, generated by the unique values of the poor, but rather, externally, as the inevitable consequence of their occupying an unfavorable position in a restrictive social structure. The poor behave differently not because they possess their own unique value system, but, on the contrary, because they have internalized the dominant values but do not have the opportunity to realize these values through the socially sanctioned avenues. (p. 27)

From this perspective the means to ameliorate poverty must include changes in society and its institutions so as to remove the societal forces that constrain efforts of the poor to improve their lot. Waxman (1983, pp. 27-28) offered Merton's (1938) explanation of the high crime rate among the poor as a classic situationalist's stance with respect to the nature of poverty. Merton held that all Americans, including the poor, aspire to economic success, but that "the actual social organization is such that there exist class differentials in the accessibility of these *common* success-symbols" (cited in Waxman, 1983, p. 28). Thus it is not that the poor hold a different set of social values so much as it is that the structures of society are such that they exclude the poor from legitimate means of achieving those values. The values are so strong in American society, however, that many poor seek to achieve them by turning to crime.

In a similar fashion, situationalists tend to ascribe responsibility for much of the lack of success of poor children in school to the schools themselves. They point to inadequacies in the school system and particularly to the "negative manner in which lower class children are viewed and related to in the school system" (Waxman, 1983, pp. 42-43).

Clearly, policymakers who accept the situational perspective would recommend policies quite different from those who hold the cultural perspective. Waxman (1983, p. 47) lists "such innovations as decentralization, community control, open enrollment, and affirmative action" as educational policies derived from the situational perspective. All of these represent efforts to affect poverty through changes in the structure of society.

The Relational Perspective

While conceding that the cultural and situational perspectives are, to some extent, useful in helping understand the nature of poverty and that those perspectives have generated some useful social policies, Waxman asserted that "neither of these positions accounts for the complete relationship between the poor and the non-poor" (1983, p. 48). The arguments he used to make that point (pp. 48-68), while interesting, are not relevant to the purposes of this chapter, which are simply to identify the predominant contemporary views that have or are likely to influence policymaking. The matter of whether those views are accurate is more or less irrelevant to that purpose. If policymakers hold a particular view, it *will* be reflected in their policy recommendations regardless of its validity!

This review, therefore, will move directly to a consideration of Waxman's concept of the relational perspective which he has proposed as a more complete and accurate view from which could emanate more effective policies. The relational view holds that the deeply rooted causes of poverty are neither cultural nor situational, but that they are related to "stigma," a concept that Waxman has adapted from Goffman. Waxman (1983) cited Goffman (1963) to define stigma:

> While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind -- in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our mind from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma. (p. 69)

The "stigma of poverty" exists due to the non-poor being aware of the anti-social behavior of a small minority of the poor, then attributing those qualities to *all* of the poor. As noted earlier in this chapter, such a view of the poor is firmly rooted in history. It is closely akin to the Poor Laws' implicit view of the poor as being morally defective. In discussing a nationwide study of American political beliefs, Waxman (1983) confirmed that contemporary attitudes toward the poor may have changed very little:

> This study revealed that in 1964, a year in which idealism concerning the elimination or eradication of poverty was very high, the majority of Americans saw "lack of effort" as the major source of poverty. (p. 73)

Waxman held that it is precisely this stigma and its effect on both intra- and inter-group interactions between the poor and the non-poor that accounts for the persistence of poverty in American society. He again cited Goffman (1963) in discussing the dynamics of that interaction:

> The behavior of the stigmatized individual is, to a great extent, a self-fulfilling prophecy in the sense that the person having a stigma very often adjusts to the role prescriptions of how an individual with that stigma is supposed to behave and to what the society thinks of the individual with that particular stigma. (p. 93)

The result, of course, is reinforcement of the stigma. The non-poor gain evidence to support their pejorative view of the poor, and the poor gain evidence that they are what the non-poor believe them to be.

Waxman (1983) stated that policies generated from the cultural and situational perspectives have ignored the effect of stigma, and thus have contributed to the alienation of the poor and the entrenchment of poverty in American society:

> A basic flaw in the strategies, proposals, and policies that have thus far been discussed is that they are designed to *assist the poor;* as such, they invariably contribute to the further isolation of the poor and enhance the stigma of poverty. (p. 115)

According to Waxman (1983), for poverty policies to be effective, they must acknowledge the pervasive effect of stigma and aim at alleviating it while, at the same time, increasing and enhancing the interaction between the poor and the non-poor. He called for "basic situational change which aims at the *relational* problem -- the problem of the relationship between the poor and the non-poor" (p. 105). A key element of such a strategy is that programs should be universal, that is, they should benefit and be accessible to all members of society, not just the poor. Waxman (1983) concluded his discussion of the situational perspective in the following manner:

> The conclusion derived from the foregoing analysis points to the requirement for integrating, rather than the heretofore isolating, social policies. Toward this end, then, from the conclusions of this analysis emerges an operational index for the evaluation of social policy. *Specifically, whatever the short-range benefits, the basic question must be: Will the program and policy, in the long run, lead to the integration of the poor into the society, or will it inevitably lead to their further isolation?* (italics added) (p. 128)

The American "War on Poverty"

The American "War on Poverty" has had a profound effect on the thinking of contemporary policymakers as they struggle with issues related to poverty in society. This is so because the War on Poverty was a national, heavily financed initiative which spawned many programs aimed at eradicating poverty. It seems unlikely that a contemporary policymaker would consider supporting or initiating a new policy or program without asking whether a similar policy or program was tried as part of the War on Poverty, and, if it was, whether its evaluations were positive. For these reasons, at least a cursory examination of the War on Poverty is necessary to set the stage for this study.

Although, in his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964, Lyndon Johnson declared "unconditional war on poverty," the war was not officially begun until the August, 1964 passing of the Economic Opportunity Act (Haveman, 1987, p. 3). That act created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and invested it with responsibility for overseeing ten different programs including:

> the Community Action program, Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, work experience program, adult basic education program, college work study program, aid to migratory workers, rural loan program, small business loan program, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). (Anderson, 1975, p. 75)

The cornerstone of the War on Poverty, however, was the Community Action program which was the most heavily financed and thus responsible for generating many of the specific programs (including Head Start, neighborhood health centers, local housing initiatives, and local employment programs) which constituted the War on Poverty (Hallman, 1970).

Even though the OEO had been disbanded by President Nixon during 1974, the War on Poverty continued until 1980 and the election of President Reagan. The severe austerity measures he introduced ended the " postwar 'liberal era' of federal social policy" in America (Haveman, 1987, p. 4). The period being discussed, then, is from 1964 through 1980. Parenthetically, it should be noted that, during this period, Canada also conducted an official War on Poverty. Adams, Cameron, Hill, and Penz (1971) described that initiative:

> There was ... a Declaration of War on Poverty in the throne speech of April 1965, and this led to the establishment of a Special Planning Secretariat to coordinate federal government efforts that related to poverty.
>
> And eight months later, a national conference on poverty was held. But nothing came out of the conference -- and that was the extent of the Pearson government's war. Two years later, when the federal government embarked on an austerity program and cut back government services, one of its first economies was to wipe out the Special Planning Secretariat. (p. 83)

This highlights the very limited history of Canadian involvement with major poverty policies and, therefore, the need for this review to focus almost exclusively on American sources.

Waxman (1983) has demonstrated that, during this period, American policymakers and social scientists were heavily influenced in their thinking about poverty by the cultural and the situational perspectives. The programs that were implemented during the War on Poverty reflect that phenomenon.

The Community Action Program

The Community Action Program was the only truly new program introduced by the Economic Opportunity Act. The others noted in the Act already existed in various federal departments. For these, the Act simply required that they would be specifically oriented toward the poor, and that they would be coordinated by the Office of Economic Opportunity (Anderson, 1975, pp. 76-78).

Hallman (1970) wrote that "of all the programs authorized by the Economic Opportunity Act, the community action program is the most complex." This was so because it was designed, not as a program that would prescribe some form of "treatment," but more as a "policy" that would enable local communities to take whatever action was most needed to combat poverty in their communities. The Act provided that communities could create a "community action agency," which would then have access to resources to fund programs that conformed with the intent of the Community Action Program (CAP). That intent, as noted by Hallman (1970, p. 315), was that the programs be aimed at improving the lot of the poor and that they focus on "giving power to the poor." These goals were to be achieved by emphasizing "maximum feasible participation" in the planning and implementation of the programs. Kravitz defined "maximum feasible participation" as "participation by the public officials of the community, both elected and appointed: participation by voluntary agencies and institutions; and participation by representatives of the poor" (1970, p. 297). The strongest emphasis was to be placed on participation of the poor.

Even with the emphasis on local decision making with respect to the nature of the programs to be implemented under the Community Action Program, several types of programs appeared in almost all areas in which a community action agency was formed. Hallman (1970, p. 316), in his study of 35 such areas, for example, found that every community studied had Head Start and the Neighborhood Youth Corps and that most had neighborhood service centers; all of which were programs strongly supported by the OEO. He did note, however, that:

> a number of communities have used CAP funds to introduce program innovations: a neighborhood health center in Denver; a program hiring elderly persons as library aids in North-east Kingdom, Vermont; Project Retains, a summer program for potential junior high school dropouts in South Carolina; the legal

> services program in Washington, D.C.; the comprehensive manpower system developed in St. Louis; the multiservice neighborhood center in Detroit; and a rural version in 27 locations in the eight Arkansas counties. (p. 317)

Hallman also noted that some of these locally developed initiatives gained fairly widespread application, particularly those pertaining to legal services and comprehensive health care (p. 317). These, of course, are only a few of the programs that were implemented during the War on Poverty. They do, however, serve the purpose of illustrating the general nature of the programming. Although a thorough description and analysis of those programs is far beyond the scope and intent of this chapter, a brief comment on three of the programs that were of a fairly high profile during the War on Poverty may further that same purpose.

Head Start

Head Start was a CAP program until April 1969, at which time it was transferred to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Shingles, 1970, p. 131). By that time, however, the form that the program was to take had already been more or less set. All Head Start programs were similar in the sense that they provided services to preschool children, but, as Hallman (1970) noted, the similarity ended there:

> Head Start illustrates the way CAP services can be different. First, Head Start provides a combination of educational, health, child care, and family services. ... Second, Head Start offers a new approach to the role of parents and other citizens. In a few locales this is not much more than service to parents, although most are providing parents employment opportunities in the program. In a growing number of communities, parents and other citizens are acting in a policy advisory capacity, and in a few instances, the residents are completely in charge through a delegate agency which they control. ... Third, Head Start is being used to modify the practices of existing institutions, particularly elementary schools. ... Fourth, Head Start uses a considerable number of volunteers, thus broadening the degree of community participation. And, fifth, Head Start focuses upon opportunity and prevention, thus seeking to break the cycle of poverty. (p. 317)

Although Head Start always retained a focus on preschool children, it took many different forms across America. It is therefore not surprising that evaluations of Head Start were mixed and inconclusive. Many of the earliest studies were fairly discouraging in that they seemed to demonstrate that, while Head Start led to early gains in I.Q., those gains were lost by the time the students were in grade 2. More recent studies, however, have demonstrated that students gain both academically and socially (Lazar and Darlington, 1978, p.1). With respect to these "mixed" research results, Haveman (1987) commented:

> Because the methods and evaluative criteria varied so much, and because so many program variations were investigated, no general conclusion seems possible. Some programs, in some settings, for some groups appear to have been successful; others seem to have failed. (p. 139)

Such confusing results seem to offer little direction to policymakers. During the past several years, however, there has been an awakening of interest in the potential effects of preschool programs on the life chances of poor children. This phenomenon is examined later in this chapter.

Neighborhood Service Centers

Neighborhood service centers varied greatly with respect to their programming. The one commonalty was that all, at least to some extent, helped coordinate their community members' access to services provided by other agencies. Hallman (1970) wrote of them:

> Their emphases differ as widely as the community action agencies which sponsor them. Mostly they consist of a common gathering place for a few decentralized programs and a point of referral to other services. But some communities, such as Detroit and Phoenix, use them as a major means for linking services so that they work together as a concerted whole. A few others, such as San Francisco and Syracuse, use them as a base for neighborhood organizations aimed at building a power bloc among the poor. (p. 318)

Neighborhood Legal Services

The OEO Legal Services Program was intended to serve two purposes: to provide legal services to the poor when they were needed, and to assist the poor "to use the legal system as a vehicle for social change" (Stumpf, Turpen, and Culver, 1975, p. 191). Although the major emphasis was to be on the second of those purposes (Rubin, 1975, p. 25), as Stumpf, Turpen, and Culver (1975, pp. 194-198) demonstrated the major effect of the program was the improved representation of the poor in court. In their words, "most programs practice almost exclusively traditional, case-by-case, band-aid law" (p. 194).

There were some gains in the area of social change. Shostak, for example, described how the California Rural Legal Assistance Program "has successfully checked the efforts of the state to cut back welfare payments and medical aid to the poor and has fought against the Governor's efforts to import cheap farm labor from Mexico" (1970, p. 350). There were, however, relatively few such gains. As Stumpf, Turpen, and Culver (1975) lamented, far more battles were lost than were won:

> Based on the testimony of those experienced in the law reform struggle these past nine years one must conclude that the effort has been disappointing. The welfare behemoth grinds on, there being scarcely any evidence that the thousands of suits brought to correct its injustices have significantly improved the economic position of its millions of recipients. The housing situation for the poor is if anything *worse* than it was when legal services began, and in fields such as consumer and education law whatever systemic change has been wrought has by all evidence been minimal. (p. 198)

Stumpf, Turpen, and Culver (1975) expressed serious reservations as to the potential of legal services to achieve substantial law reform, then commented:

> One can not fail to be impressed with the capacity of the political and social system to mount countervailing pressures sufficient to maintain the status quo of the poor. (p. 202)

The examples given above are typical of the poverty programs undertaken during the War on Poverty. Those programs took different shapes in different communities, and none were universally successful.

Evaluations of the War on Poverty

As the examples offered above illustrate, there was a great deal of variance as to the manner in which particular programs were implemented in different communities. Although this was in accord with the intent of CAP (to allow local communities to respond to their local needs), as Haveman (1978, p. 139) noted, it confounded efforts to evaluate those programs. Overall evaluations of the War on Poverty, of course, are constrained by that same phenomenon.

Scholars who have commented on the overall effectiveness of the War on Poverty tended not to be concerned that the war did not achieve its original purpose of eradicating poverty in America. They dismissed that as having been an unrealistic goal (Shostak, 1970, p. 345), then proceeded to discuss the policy's relative effectiveness and factors that constrained that effectiveness. Anderson (1975), for example, argued that political forces constrained the effectiveness, then ultimately led to the demise of the War on Poverty. Consider, also, the following comments from prominent American poverty researchers:

> Antipoverty programs are clearly not enough: not only because they lack coordination, have no overall objective, reflect a piecemeal approach, deal with poverty as due to temporary causes or happenstance, and view the poor as inferior beings. They are not enough because, fundamentally, "programs" imply that poverty can be eradicated through a strategy of services, while poverty is really a problem of income and reducing it calls for an income strategy. ... [Nevertheless] antipoverty programs are important and indeed many of the poor are poor because of inadequate services: the poor have benefited from them. (Ornati, 1970, p. 79)

> The expenditure of some $6 billion by OEO and more than fifteen-fold this sum by other governmental agencies between 1964 and 1968 has clearly failed to reduce the problem to anywhere near the extent expected by an impatient general public. Poverty has starkly demonstrated its multi-faceted intransigence and its self-regenerating mechanism. (Shostak, 1970, p. 345)

> On balance, America appears to have earned only what it is presently equal to: a severely limited war on poverty, significant as much for its concerted defense of the non-poor and their

> favorite institutions as for its undersupported "band-aide" attempt to help the deprived. To its credit, the national antipoverty effort has succeeded in publicizing the plight of the disadvantaged, discouraging premature certainty in reform prescriptions, and encouraging recognition of certain system linkages. It has also tutored the nation in a healthy skepticism where claims of program success are involved, even as it has made possible some insights and social advances beneficial to poor and non-poor alike. (Shostak, 1970, p. 368)

> As a result of both planned and unplanned developments ... the economic status of the poor had improved substantially by the early 1970s. Those gains held until 1980, in spite of some increases in poverty incidence as a result of recession in the mid-1970s. Moreover, even education and income in 1980 was narrower than in the early 1960s. and the participation of blacks and other groups of the poor in the political process had increased markedly. The volume of cash and, in particular, of in-kind transfers targeted on the poor experienced unprecedented growth. Although only the former contributes to a reduction in officially measured poverty, both have augmented the economic well-being of those at the bottom of the income distribution. Indeed, if family income is defined to include the recipient value of in-kind benefits, the nation in 1980 could be said to have come a considerable distance in reducing income poverty. (Haveman, 1987, p. 19)

With respect to its outcomes, these scholars seem to agree that, while not completely successful, the War on Poverty did improve conditions for the poor in America. They also agree that the "war" was not as successful as it might have been. This they ascribed to the War on Poverty having suffered from lack of coordination among programs, insufficient resource support, undependable political support, and the unwillingness of American society to make substantial structural changes.

Conceptual Lessons From the War on Poverty

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the War on Poverty has been the conceptual lessons that have emerged from reflections on the relative success of its component programs. The first of those lessons may relate to the intransigence of poverty in society. Very few policymakers would now expect a "quick fix" for the problems of the poor. A related lesson is that poverty is a multidimensional problem. Miller and Bloomberg (1970, pp. 25-

28), for example, identified six "dimensions of inequality" (money income, assets, basic services, education and social mobility, political participation, and social status and self-respect), among which are interrelationships that need to be considered in any social strategy aimed at ameliorating poverty. They also stated that while it is possible for social strategies

> to omit some of the dimensions of poverty ... a consequence of such omissions may be that actual human beings get left out of plans and programs intended to bring the whole of our population into the mainstream of life's chances in our increasingly affluent society. (1970, p. 28)

Miller and Bloomberg also noted the potential negative consequences of emphasizing one dimension at the expense of the others:

> Another problem is that a gain in one dimension may require further deprivation on another. More often that not in order to receive the meager cash income provided through most "relief" and "assistance" programs, the individual must submit to conditions and procedures that result in further loss of status and self-respect. (1970, p. 29)

This last point is reminiscent of Waxman's (1983) arguments relating to stigma. Indeed, the relational perspective seems to have been informed by the lessons noted above. The view that an effective social strategy for dealing with poverty would be "multidimensional" begs the question to be addressed in the next section of this chapter: What role can educational programs and policy play in combatting poverty?

Education and the Fight Against Poverty

At the outset of the War on Poverty there was an extremely optimistic view of the potential of educational programming. Education was thought of as the major vehicle for social mobility, and thus capable of generating programs that would eradicate poverty (Levin, 1977, p.11). That poverty has not been eradicated despite the expenditure of millions of dollars to support a variety of educational poverty programs (Levin, 1977, p.

21 listed 22 such programs), has resulted in scholars adopting a somewhat different position with respect to the role of educational policy in the fight against poverty.

In 1977, Levin expressed what may be the most extreme position. He argued that, because the existence of poverty is a societal, not an educational problem, educational policies and programs cannot and should not be expected to solve them (Levin, 1977, p. 10). By 1985 he had softened his position and was proposing that society increase its investment in the education of the poor, particularly at the preschool level (Levin, 1985).

Perhaps the most frequently stated position is that, while unable to deal with all of the problems associated with poverty, educational policy would play a major role in any well conceived strategy to combat poverty (Haveman, 1987, p. 140; Pike, 1988, p. 151; and Roemer & Kisch, 1970, p. 255). Pike (1988), for example, wrote:

> It appears to this author to be more reasonable to argue -- as indeed do many proponents of the "equality of condition" line -- that what *should* be taking place in our society is a two-pronged attack on both inequality of condition and inequality of opportunity, with the schools continuing to strive against those physical and mental outcomes of environmental inequalities which limit learning potential and dampen ambition. (p. 151)

With this position as a point of departure, the question that remains to be investigated is: Which educational programs have been demonstrated to be most promising in ameliorating the "physical and mental outcomes of environmental inequalities" of which Pike wrote?

Educational Poverty Programs

Before beginning this discussion of the educational programs that could comprise part of an effective social strategy for ameliorating poverty, it is important to note that, as suggested in Chapter II, whether such programs exist, or rather whether policymakers *perceive* that such programs exist, is a major factor in determining whether policy will be developed. The matter of whether such programs exist and, if they do, how well they are supported by research is, therefore, of great significance for this study.

With respect to that issue, there has been, over the past several decades, a shift in position among poverty researchers and theorists. The earliest position, supported by influential studies such as Coleman's (1966) *Equality of Educational Opportunity* and Jencks et al.'s (1972) *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*, was that school success was almost entirely determined by socio-economic status and that there was little schools could do to change that. That position did not last long. Coleman's study, in particular, triggered an avalanche of similar studies aimed at investigating the validity of his claim. Those studies have demonstrated that the conclusions at which Coleman arrived were unwarranted, even with respect to his own data (Richards and Ratsoy, 1987, p. 112).

The current position seems to be that schools can make a considerable difference. The literature and research supporting that position identifies two major areas in which educational programming can enhance the success rates of poor children. One relates to the enhancement of programs that currently exist within the structures of North American schooling and is generally discussed in "effective schools" or "effective teaching" literature. The other relates to programming that would represent an addition to the existing structures and tends to focus on the delivery of education during the earliest years of schooling.

Enhancing Current Educational Programming

While some of the "effective schools" research is reported as being specifically applicable to schools in low socioeconomic status (SES) areas (e.g., Mann, 1985; Pecheone, 1986; and Stedman, 1985), much of it is reported as being more generally applicable. Clark, Lotto, and Astuto (1984, p. 60), in noting that almost all of the effective schools research has been conducted in low SES areas, raised the question of whether the findings are indeed generally applicable. More to the purposes of this study, they established that the findings of the effective schools research are *most* relevant to low SES schools.

The research to which reference is made above has generated large bodies of literature described as "effective schools," "effective teaching," and "school improvement." In order to clarify what programs aimed at providing more effective schooling for the poor might entail, each of those areas are reviewed below. No attempt is made to discuss and synthesize all of that literature. The purpose noted above can be achieved by presenting "selected" findings from each of the areas. In each case, however, the references cited provide reasonably comprehensive coverage of their topics.

Effective Schools

Literature in this area is concerned with identifying aspects of the overall organizational, structural, leadership and cultural environments of schools that contribute to student achievement. "School effect" studies, which are closely related, report fairly specific findings relating to particular details of school organization. MacPhail-Wilcox and King (1986), for example, reported:

> [T]eachers' verbal achievement, experience, salary levels, and professional preparation are significantly related to student achievement. (p. 209)
>
> As a group, class size indices (size of specific class, specific staff to pupil ratio, class size, and pupil teacher ratio) overwhelmingly show significant relationships with student achievement measures. (p. 210)
>
> [A]bility grouping has no negative influence on the performance of high socioeconomic and White students, but it does have a negative influence on the performance of low socioeconomic and minority students. (p.213)

The effective schools research which has recently assumed such a high profile focuses on broader aspects of schooling. Based on their review of that research, Clark, Lotto and Astuto (1984) asserted that:

> The "search for instructionally effective schools" studies generated a consensus about a cluster of factors noted as characteristic of such schools:
> 1. Strong administrative leadership;
> 2. A climate of expectation for satisfactory student achievement;
> 3. An orderly, but not oppressive school climate;

> 4. A focus on pupil acquisition of basic school skills;
> 5. A system for continuous monitoring of pupil progress; and
> 6. Resources that can be focussed on the fundamental learning objectives of the school. (p. 47)

Effective Teaching

Because they have the most direct contact with students, teachers have the most potential of any factor to do with schooling for affecting student success. Indeed, it is likely that the "effective schools" attributes identified above have effect only to the extent that they are manifested in the interactions between teachers and students. For this reason, much energy has been expended in attempts to determine the teaching processes that are most influential in promoting student success.

Joyce and Showers (1988) have provided a comprehensive review, analysis and synthesis of effective teaching studies. So as to illustrate the nature of their results several of their findings are presented below.

1. Teachers who have received training in and implemented the "cooperative learning model" have demonstrated remarkable results. Joyce and Showers commented:

   > The cooperative environment engendered by these models has had substantial effects on the cooperative behavior of the students, increasing feelings of empathy for others, reducing intergroup tensions and aggressive and antisocial behavior, improving moral judgement, and building positive feelings toward others, including those of other ethnic groups. Many of the effect sizes are substantial -- one or two standard deviations is not uncommon and one is as high as eight. (pp. 34-35)

2. Several other teaching strategies were identified as having a substantial effect on student learning. The "advanced organizer" strategy demonstrated an average effect size of 1.35 standard deviations for lower order achievement and of .42 standard deviations for higher order skills (p. 36). The "mnemonics" strategy was shown to have an effect of between 1.3 and 1.91 standard deviations on specific types of memory tasks (p. 38).
3. Teachers use of "wait time," that is, their simply allowing approximately 5 seconds for students to think after asking a question, has an effect size of approximately .2 standard deviations. Joyce and Showers commented:

> That the effect is modest should not disqualify it from being considered as a candidate for a staff development program. The practice is clear and easy to understand, teachers can acquire the requisite behaviors quickly, and they are appropriate for many situations. A modest behavioral change that improves the quality of classroom discourse and is likely to increase student involvement and pay off regularly in achievement related terms is, from our perspective, a fine candidate for our attempts to improve our teaching. (p. 43)

4. With respect to the "basic recitation" mode of teaching, Joyce and Showers concluded:

> The more effective teachers:
> - Teach the classroom as a whole
> - Present information or skills clearly and animatedly
> - Keep the teaching sessions task-oriented
> - Are nonevaluative and keep instruction relaxed
> - Have high expectations for achievement (give more homework, pace lessons faster, create alertness)
> - Relate comfortably to the students, with the consequence that they have fewer behavior problems (p. 55)

In view of results such as those presented by Joyce and Showers it would be difficult to argue that the nature and quality of the teaching does not have great potential for affecting the range of influence of the school environment on student success. The school improvement literature discussed below suggests the means by which that potential might be realized.

School Improvement

It is not enough to know what constitutes effective school and classroom practices; those practices must also be implemented. The school improvement literature clarifies that such implementation is far from a straightforward matter. Joyce and Showers (1988, p. 71), for example, have demonstrated that when teachers are only presented with information and theory about effective teaching skills they will not transfer those skills into their regular classroom practice. For teachers to successfully transfer the new skills, they must receive the appropriate information and theory, see the skills demonstrated, practice them in a safe setting, then receive "coaching" in their classrooms. For school districts that are concerned with effective implementation, Joyce and Showers (1988) have proposed a comprehensive "human resource development plan" that takes account of what is now known about implementing school improvements.

Based on their review of the school improvement literature, Clark, Lotto and Astuto (1984) arrived at conclusions that complement the position outlined by Joyce and Showers (1988). Among their conclusions Clark, Lotto and Astuto (1984) noted:

> Teachers can and will implement new practices and programs given active leadership from building and central office administrators, a chance for planning the implementation process, appropriate training, opportunities for interaction, breathing space to try and fail, and continuous assistance and support. (p. 59)
>
> Building level administrators make a difference in school improvement programs by establishing a climate of expectations that teachers will successfully improve practice and by providing on-site coordination, communication, assistance and supports. (p. 59)
>
> Specific resources are necessary to support effective school improvement programs:
> (a) Staff development programs that are task-specific and provide on-going, continuous assistance and support; and
> (b) Monetary resources that are adequate to provide the people, materials and time needed in the program. (p.59)

With respect to improving education for the poor, the effective schools research has identified promising school-wide practices. The effective teaching research has identified promising instructional practices, while the school improvement research has established that efforts to improve school and teacher effectiveness must be undertaken in a thoughtful manner, with the backing of sufficient personnel and financial resources. Taken together, they offer a process approach to improving educational programming for the poor.

Additions to Current Educational Programming

The educational interventions discussed above focus on improving programs that presently exist within the structures of most North American educational systems. The programs considered in this section are present in some, but not all, of those systems. For many school districts, implementing these programs would require major policy and structural changes.

The programs discussed in this section are those that the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development (RPCCED) (1987) proposed as necessary to any American social strategy aimed at combatting poverty. The Committee for Economic Development (CED) is a research and educational organization consisting of over 200 business executives and educators. The membership includes many of the most influential people in American business, including the chief executive officers or board chairmen of Ford Motor Company, Eli Lilly and Company, Conoco Inc., and Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company to name only a few. The educators on the committee include the Presidents of John Hopkins University and Hunter College (for a complete listing see RPCCED, 1987, pp. vii-viii). Their terms of reference for conducting research were described as follows:

> The bylaws emphasize that "all research is to be thoroughly objective in character, and the approach in each instance is to be from the standpoint of the general welfare and not from that of any special political or economic group." The committee is aided by a Research Advisory Board of leading social scientists and by a small permanent professional staff. (RPCCED, 1987, p. vi)

The research, then, was informed by some of the finest minds in business and education and guided by leading social scientists. The composition of the research committee and the rigor with which the research was conducted greatly enhances the credibility of its findings and recommendations.

The study undertaken by RPCCED resulted in their making the following recommendation:

> **We urge policy makers to consider what we believe to be the three most important investment strategies for providing children in need with a better start and a boost toward successful learning: prevention through early intervention, restructuring the foundations of education, and retention and reentry.** (RPCCED, 1987, p. 11)

The specific recommendations that relate to each dimension of their proposed strategy are discussed below.

Prevention Through Early Intervention

The committee argued that it is less costly to prevent early failure than it is to pay for the long term societal consequences of that failure. They offered that such preventive efforts should include:

> - **Prenatal and postnatal care for pregnant teens and other high-risk mothers and follow-up health care and developmental screening for their infants.**
>
> - **Parenting education for both mothers and fathers, family health care, and nutritional guidance.**
>
> - **Quality child-care arrangements for poor working parents that stress social development and school readiness.**
>
> - **Quality preschool programs for all disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds.** (RPCED, 1987, p. 11)

Perhaps the best researched, and certainly the most frequently recommended of these interventions are the preschool programs (e.g., Berrueta-Clement et al., 1983; Lazar and Darlington, 1978; Levin, 1984; and Wright, 1983). Berrueta-Clement et al. (1983) may have provided the most convincing evidence that preschool programming can greatly enhance the life chances of poor children. Their work is particularly convincing because of the longitudinal nature of their study, the quality of its design, and the methodological rigor with which the study was conducted (see Berrueta-Clement et al., 1983, pp. 2-11).

The results, reported after having "followed" the subjects of this experimental study until they were age 19, are dramatic. On every measure of success, those in the experimental group (who had experienced the preschool program) were much better off than those in the control group (who had not received the program). Berrueta-Clement et al. (1983) summarized the results of their study, which are also displayed in Table 1:

> Results to age 19 indicate lasting beneficial effects of preschool education in improving cognitive performance during early childhood; in improving scholastic placement and achievement during the school years; in decreasing delinquency and crime, the use of welfare assistance, and the incidence of teenage pregnancy; and in increasing high school graduation rates and the frequency of enrollment in postsecondary programs and employment. ...
>
> Preschool attendance altered performance by nearly a factor of two on four major variables at age 19. The rates of employment and participation in college or vocational training were nearly double for those with preschool as compared with those without preschool. For those who attended preschool, the rate of teenage pregnancy (including live births) and the percent of years spent in special education classes were slightly over half of what they were for those who did not attend preschool. Preschool attendance led to a reduction of 20 percentage points in the detention and arrest rate and nearly that much in the high school dropout rate. Those who attended preschool also did better on a test of functional competence. (p. 1)

In addition to these social gains, a detailed cost-benefit analysis (see Berrueta-Clement et al., 1983, pp. 83-92) demonstrated that for each $1.00 invested in the preschool program, there was a return to society of approximately $7.00 dollars. RPCCED also stated that preschool was a good financial investment, suggesting a return of $4.75 for every $1.00 invested (1987, p. 6).

Table 1

Major Findings at Age 19 in the Perry Preschool Study

Category	Number[a] Responding	Preschool Group	No- Preschool Group	p[b]
Employed	121	59%	32%	.032
High school graduation (or its equivalent)	121	67%	49%	.034
College or vocational training	121	38%	21%	.029
Ever detained or arrested	121	31%	51%	.022
Females only: teen pregnancies, per 100	49	64	117	.084
Functional competence (APL Survey: possible score 40)	109	24.6	21.8	.025
% of years in special education	112	16%	28%	.039

[a] Total n = 123

[b] Two-tailed p-values are presented if less than .100

(adapted from Berrueta et al., 1983, p. 2)

Restructuring the Foundations of Education

RPCCED (1987) summarized their recommendations in this area as follows:

> **We believe that a great many of the nation's schools, particularly those that serve large numbers of disadvantaged students, need a radical redefinition of their purpose and structure. This will require a fundamental restructuring of the way most schools are organized, staffed, managed, and financed. As a society, we need to rethink the relationship of the school to the community. (p. 12)**

They offered the following as specific elements that need to be addressed in that restructuring:

> - **School-based management that involves principals, teachers, parents, students, and other school personnel in shared decision making and accountability for results. School management should encourage flexibility and innovation in the school curriculum, teaching methods, and organization.**
>
> - **Teachers who have made a commitment to working with the disadvantaged and who have expertise in dealing with multiple problems. Special support for those teachers needs to be made available by school districts and schools of education.**
>
> - **Smaller schools and smaller classes that are designed not only to raise achievement levels but to increase quality contact with teachers and other adults.**
>
> - **Support for preschool and child-care programs by the school system where appropriate for the community.**
>
> - **Up-to-date educational technology integrated into the curriculum to provide new learning opportunities for students and additional pedagogical support for teachers.**
>
> - **Support systems within the schools that include health services, nutritional guidance, and psychological, career, and family counseling.**
>
> - **Increased emphasis on extracurricular activities that help build academic, social, or physical skills.** (pp. 12-13)

They placed extremely strong emphasis on the need for a "bottom-up strategy" and thus on the concept of school-based management (p. 13).

Retention and Reentry

Although acknowledging that older students in danger of dropping out or who have already dropped out are the most difficult groups "for which to make generalized prescriptions because their needs and skills vary greatly," RPCCED (1987) offered the following recommendations:

> **We recommend that programs targeted to students at risk of dropping out and those who have already left school should be carefully designed to meet the particular needs and deficiencies of these young people. Specifically, these programs should:**
>
> - **Combine work experience with education in basic skills.**
>
> - **Operate in an alternative setting that focuses on improving motivation, skills, and self-esteem.**
>
> - **Provide continuity in funding and long-term evaluation of the success of the program and the progress of participants.** (p. 14)

The committee noted that evaluation research focussing on programs aimed at retention and reentry are beginning to show promising results:

> Further studies of CCC [California Conservation Corps] now in progress seem to indicate that all program participants, both those identified as at risk and those from more stable backgrounds, are showing gains in income and employment relative to a control group one full year after participation in the program. The follow-up study also seems to indicate that at-risk youths who participated in the CCC have developed more positive attitudes about themselves and their communities as a result of their experiences. (RPCCED, 1987, p. 61)

With respect to the overall strategy which RPCCED has proposed, they made the following point very strongly:

> Effecting these longer-term reforms will take a sustained effort and a firm commitment over the years by a broad-based coalition of government, education, business, and community leaders. And it will require more money. **Any plan for major improvements in the development and education of disadvantaged children that does not recognize the need for additional resources over a sustained period is doomed to failure.** (p. 4)

They also recognized that educational reform cannot solve all of the problems and that a comprehensive approach involving other institutions is necessary. They highlighted, in particular, the need for welfare reform (p. 4).

Summary

Programs that are supported in the literature as having potential for contributing to an educational social strategy aimed at ameliorating poverty fall into two categories: those that entail enhancements to extant educational programing and those that entail structural additions to current educational practice. The review of the literature identified research which supports the position that programs in both of those categories could contribute to the success of poor children. With respect to this study, the contents of this section provide a perspective from which to assess the adequacy of the knowledge of social strategies held by principals, senior administrators, and trustees.

Poverty in Edmonton

The previous section of this chapter clarifies that an educational social strategy for ameliorating poverty is available. This section provides data from which to begin considering the issue of whether such a social strategy is needed in Edmonton. What is the nature and extent of poverty in Edmonton? What social strategies and policies are currently in place to address needs of the poor? Are those social strategies and policies adequate? These are important questions for this study. The perceptions of principals, senior administrators, and trustees with respect to the questions are presented in Chapters IV, V, and VI. The discussion below presents some relatively "objective" data pertaining to the same questions.

Poverty can be described either quantitatively or qualitatively. Quantitative descriptions consist of statistics, graphs, and charts that identify the number of poor, their distribution in society and other similar matters. Qualitative descriptions consist of written accounts of the quality of life for the poor.

Qualitative Descriptions

Adams, Cameron, Hill, and Penz (1971) offered the following description of the quality of life for the poor in Canada:

> To be poor in our society is to suffer the most outrageous kinds of violence perpetuated by human beings on other human beings.
>
> From the very beginning, when you are still a child, you must learn to undervalue yourself. You are told that you are poor because your father is too stupid or too shiftless to find a decent job; or that he is a good-for-nothing who has abandoned you to a mother who cannot cope. And as you grow up on the streets, you are told that your mother is dirty and lazy and that is why she has to take money from the welfare department. Because you are poor, the lady from the welfare office is always coming around asking questions. She wants to know if your mother is living with a man, and why she is pregnant again.
>
> If as a child you are to survive, you must close these violences out of your mind and retreat into a smaller world that you can handle. ...
>
> Unless you are blessed with an exceptional stroke of good fortune or a driving natural talent that will get you out into the larger world of affluence and opportunity, then you will, like the majority of the poor, live on the street and die on the street -- and very few will ever give a damn about you. (pp. xi-xii)

As one aspect of the research that culminated in their 1984 report, *Not Enough: The Meaning and Measurement of Poverty in Canada,* the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) National Task Force on the Definition and Meaning of Poverty in Canada conducted public hearings across Canada. During those hearings they were confronted with many descriptions of the quality of life of the poor. Those experiences led them to assert in their final report that "statistics and income lines cannot adequately describe the plight of those living on low incomes" (p. 13). Before presenting their statistical analysis, therefore, they relayed a number of "stories" that illustrate the nature of poverty in Canada (pp. 13-22). This, a written submission from a Vancouver woman, is only one of them:

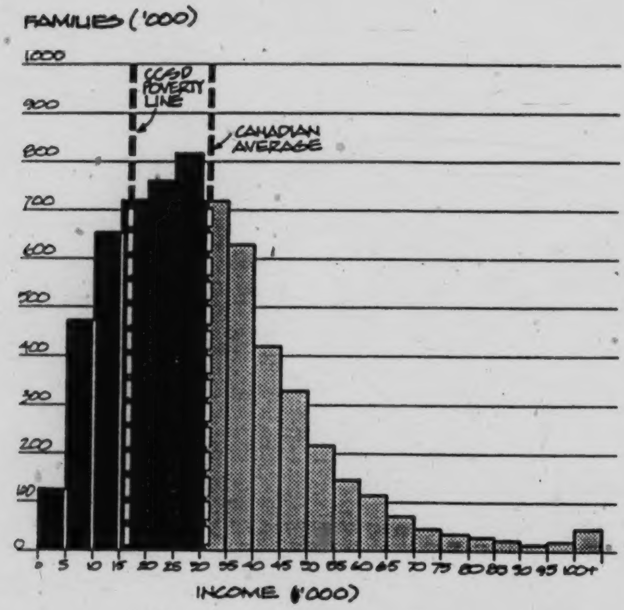
> "You asked: What does poverty mean to me?
>
> Well, to me poverty means not being able to buy food that is nutritional, instead of spaghetti and potatoes with the occasional two pounds of hamburg. I don't go to the food bank because I don't want to take food from someone who may need it more than me.
>
> Not having that all-important job to go to.
>
> Not being able to buy even the cheapest clothes to put on my back.
>
> Doing the laundry in the bath tub because I can't afford to go to the laundromat.
>
> Making sure that I make my phone calls before I leave home. I can't afford to give B.C. Tel. any of my precious quarters.
>
> Not being able to buy someone you know the odd cup of coffee.
>
> Losing people you called friends because you're now a bum and not of the fit and proper working class.
>
> Having absolutely no sense of security and worrying abut [sic] what will happen if you get sick or die at home. In my case, no one would know for a week or more.
>
> Wanting to sell some of your personal effects and knowing that if you do, they will simply deduct it off your next cheque.
>
> Feeling like dirt, now that I'm broke.
>
> Having the government always cut back on the poor and not on themselves. The rent, phone, hydro, food, etc., goes up continually, but my spending capital in fact goes down with each raise in expense.
>
> Dreading every time you have to go to the welfare office, walking slow before you get there, then making a dash for the door, hoping no one sees your face as you go in to beg again." (CCSD National Task Force on the Definition and Measurement of Poverty in Canada, 1984, pp. 13-14)

Quantitative Descriptions

The CCSD National Task Force on the Definition and Measurement of Poverty (1984) provided statistical descriptions of both the extent and the depth of poverty in Canada. With respect to the extent of poverty, they noted that 2,307,000 Canadian families lived below the CCSD poverty line during 1981. This represented 25.7% of all Canadian families (p. 58). Figure 1 illustrates the depth of poverty in Canada during 1981. The graph illustrates that during that year, the average poor household existed on $4,000 less that the average poverty line (p. 54).

Figure 3

The Depth of Poverty -- Distribution of Income, All Families, 1981



(adapted from CCSD National Task Force on the Definition and Measurement of Poverty in Canada, 1987, p. 55)

The Child Poverty Action Group (1986) also reported national poverty statistics. They cited the National Council of Welfare's *Poverty Profile 1985* in stating that during 1984 "an estimated 1.2 million children were living in poverty in Canada" (p. 1).

Using the Statistics Canada low income cut offs as poverty lines (these are considerably lower than the CCSD poverty lines), the Edmonton Social Planning Council (1985) noted that 49,200 Alberta families lived below the poverty line during 1981. By 1984, that number had more than doubled to 100,700 families (p. 1). This meant that, during 1984, one in six Alberta families lived in poverty (p. 2). With respect to the depth of poverty in Alberta, the Edmonton Social Planning Council (1985) provided the following statistics: "27% of poor families earn between half and three quarters of the poverty line income" and 25% of poor families earn less that half of the poverty line income" (p. 2).

Current Level of Support for the Poor in Edmonton

General Canadian social policies that address poverty-related issues form a context within which current educational poverty policies exist, and within which any future educational poverty policies would be developed. A brief description of those general policies is contained in the National Council of Welfare (1987) report, *Welfare in Canada: The Tangled Safety Net*. The preface to that report states:

> *Welfare in Canada* is the first comprehensive national analysis of social assistance programs operated by the provincial, territorial and municipal governments with financial assistance from Ottawa. These programs function as the safety net for Canadians.

Later, the authors noted that:

> The welfare system is only one component of a range of income security programs, including Unemployment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, provincial automobile accident insurance, Old Age Security and Family Allowances, which provide financial support to selected segments of the Canadian population. (National Council of Welfare, 1987, p. 1)

The report acknowledged that there are a number of social policies that provide assistance to those who live on or near the poverty lines, but are not yet destitute. The "working poor," for example, derive great benefit from the programs described above. If these programs were not in place, the proportion of the population that is poor in Canada would be much higher, and the gap that exists in income between the poor and the middle-class would be much greater than it currently is.

The National Council of Welfare (1987) distinguished the programs described above from the welfare system as follows:

> [The welfare system] comes into play when other sources of funds such as personal savings are nearly exhausted; when individuals are ineligible for support from other programs; when

> supplementary income is required to meet emergency or special needs. (p. 1)

Since 1966 when the Canada Assistance Plan was implemented, federal and provincial governments have shared equally in financing the welfare system. The provinces are, however, responsible for designing and administering the program (The National Council of Welfare, 1987, p. 4).

The National Council of Welfare (1987) described the strengths of the welfare system:

> The strengths of the current welfare system include the flexibility it affords to the provinces to ensure that their unique requirements are met; the provisions it makes for extenuating circumstances and special situations; its broad coverage of individuals regardless of cause of need. (p. 7)

The greatest weakness of the welfare system, they noted, "lies in its roots in the Elizabethan Poor Law which still influences the way social assistance is delivered and the attitudes many Canadians have toward welfare recipients" (p. 9). This, as noted earlier, results in a public perception of the poor as morally inferior to the non-poor. A second weakness they identified was that welfare allowances having been set well below the poverty lines has "caused severe hardships for welfare recipients" (p. 10). The National Council on Social Development (1987) provided statistics which demonstrate that during 1983, welfare recipients in Alberta subsisted on approximately two-thirds of poverty line incomes (pp. 26-29).

Many Albertans receive assistance from the welfare system. For example, during March, 1986, 126,600 Albertans were in receipt of welfare benefits (National Council of Welfare, 1987, p. 8).

The programs and policies identified above were those that the the National Council of Welfare (1987) identified as contributing to income security for the poor in Canada. There are other policies and programs that also benefit the poor. Medicare, for example, ensures that the poor will have access to high quality medical services. Although not required by their policies, Edmonton Social Services provides more support for the poor than for the non-poor. The same could be said for the the Edmonton Board of Health. There are also community agencies such as the Norwood Community Service Center, the City Centre Church Corporation, and the Boyle Street Coop which provide services almost exclusively for the poor.

This broad set of social policies and programs which address needs of the poor forms an important part of the context within which new educational poverty policies would be developed.

Current Educational Poverty Policies

Almost all of the financial resources allocated to school districts by Alberta Education, are allocated through a "block funding" formula based on student enrollment. With one exception, there are no policies or guidelines that require that any portion of those resources be directed toward the education of urban poor children. The exception is with respect to the "Disadvantaged Kindergarten Grant.". This grant is intended to provide support for kindergarten programs offered in economically disadvantaged communities.

Both of the school districts in Edmonton take advantage of the Disadvantaged Kindergarten Grant. Beyond that, neither district has policies that make direct reference to the education of economically disadvantaged students. One of the districts, however, does have a policy of allocating additional resources to schools based on "transiency," measured in terms of the number of students transferring into the school from October 1 through June 30 of the previous school year. Because urban poor schools experience more transiency than others, this policy favors them.

Educational Outcomes of Urban Poor Children in Edmonton

Although there have been no rigorous studies examining whether there is an association between poverty and educational outcomes in Edmonton, there are some data that suggest there is an association. Perhaps the only "public," or published data which address this matter were presented during a formal Education Committee Meeting of the Edmonton Public School District on February 4, 1986 (Edmonton Public School District, 1986). The following data were presented:

- On the 1985 Grade 3 English Language Arts Alberta Education Achievement Test, the scores of inner city schools were approximately 12% below the provincial average.
- On the 1985 Grade 6 Social Studies Alberta Education Achievement Test, the scores of inner city schools were approximately 11% below the provincial average.

During the meeting, those data were offered as evidence that many poor children were not being successful in school.

Chapter Summary

Historical perspectives dating back to the fourteenth century Poor Laws in England reflected beliefs that the poor were morally defective and thus needed to be controlled for the good of society. Contemporary perspectives include the cultural perspective, the situational perspective, and the relational perspective. The cultural perspective holds that there is a distinct "culture of poverty" which entraps those who experience it. The situational perspective denies that there is a culture of poverty and asserts instead that structures in society prohibit the poor from achieving the goals of mainstream society and thus that those structures are responsible for the existence of poverty. The relational perspective holds that "stigma" attached to being poor is responsible for creating a division between the poor and the non-poor, and that poverty is maintained in society due to the relational difficulties that obtain from that stigma.

Programs including Head Start, Neighborhood Service Centers, and Neighborhood Legal Services were undertaken during the War on Poverty in the United States. Evaluations of these programs and the overall War on Poverty have been mixed. Most contemporary scholars, however, contend that the War on Poverty did improve conditions for the poor.

Most scholars also agree that, although educational organizations cannot solve all poverty-related problems, appropriate educational programming is essential to efforts to ameliorate poverty. Strategies identified in "Effective Schools," "Effective Teaching," and "School Improvement" literatures have such promise. Other similarly promising programs include early intervention, school-based management, and alternative programming for "drop-outs."

Approximately one in six Alberta families lives in poverty, many of them earning far less than the Statistics Canada poverty lines. The poor are supported by a broad set of social policies including: Welfare, Unemployment Insurance, Workers' Compensation, and Medicare. Although they do not have specific poverty policies, both of the school districts involved in this study provide some additional support for urban poor schools. Nevertheless, there are indicators that, generally, poor children in Edmonton have not been successful in school.

CHAPTER IV

URBAN POVERTY AND EDUCATION: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES

A variety of themes were evident in the interview data obtained from the 11 principals who participated in this study. In this chapter, a discussion of these themes is organized into five sections so as to address the following topics: (1) demographic information; (2) the manner in which poverty affects community, home, school, and student characteristics; (3) the manner in which the schools were attempting to meet the needs of urban poor students, and the effects of this work on students and staff; (4) principals' perspectives on school district-level policies and practices; and (5) principals' understanding of the policy environment.

Demographic Information

At the beginning of their interviews, the principals were asked to describe the nature of the communities their schools serve, and to provide any demographic data they might have. In responding to this, all of the principals characterized their communities as having a large proportion of economically poor families. One simply offered that "of course the district [community] could be described as being low socio-economic." Others were more specific:

> It's a school that, well, pretty nearly half are on social assistance. I'd guess that there is a substantially larger proportion of poor families -- you know -- living below -- they have money, but living below $10,000.
>
> [School name] had 200 students who had a common denominator in that I would say that poverty was a factor in 95 to 98% of their lives -- very poor families.

These principals felt that almost all of their students came from economically poor families. Other principals described their schools as serving a more "mixed" community.

One, for example, felt that, while there was a substantial "incidence of unemployment and social assistance" in the community, there were also many "blue collar" workers. Another described a much more dramatic mix. This principal noted that while approximately one half of the students come from economically poor families,

> I've got a group of parents who perceive themselves to be middle-class, upper middle-class. You know, intact families, mother and father, brother, sister, dog and two cars, and a cottage at the lake. And then I've got a very, very distinct other group [the economically poor].

As these comments illustrate, from the principals' points of view, the schools involved in the study differed with respect to the proportion of poor children served, with the smallest proportion being approximately one half, and the largest almost the entire school population. All, however, felt that the schools served a large proportion of poor children, and that this had a substantial effect on school operations.

The principals also observed that the poor were not a homogeneous group. In some schools, most of the poor were immigrants or refugees, while in others most were Natives and Canadian-born white Anglo-Saxons. Most of the schools had a mix of these sub-groups. The following comments illustrate the various mixes in the schools.

> We are still predominantly E.S.L. [English as a Second Language]. It's about 65 to 70% that are E.S.L. originally -- Chinese and Vietnamese mostly. We have a small Native population, and the minority group is the white students in our school.

> We had over 60% Oriental students. We had 20% Native students, and then we had the other 20% of mixed European background basically.

> It is made up of children from different parts of the world. I guess you could call it a mini UN. Almost 40% of our students are Vietnamese or Chinese. And about the rest of our children, there's probably 22 or 23% Spanish, and another 20% European like Polish, Romanian. And the rest would be Canadian-born children, either Natives or European Anglo-Saxons.

> We identified 26 different ethnic groups. Very, very small pockets of all different ethnicity. The majority would be Native. From there it would be Italian, Portuguese, and a whole variety.
>
> Generally our Native population is increasing. We are between 50 and 60% Native children. The Asian population is decreasing. We have only about 10 kids who are funded as English as their second language.

Another point that most of the principals made is that while the schools located in the centre of the city do indeed serve large proportions of poor children, there are schools in other areas that serve similar populations. One principal, for example, made the following comment:

> I think it [poverty] is probably wider spread than we want to think it is. I think that inner city may be the most noticeable, and there are probably pockets of it -- [three areas within the city were named] -- where there is low-cost housing, subsidized housing.

In general, the three points that the principals made pertaining to the demographics of poverty were: (1) the schools served a large proportion of poor children; (2) there are a variety of sub-groups among the urban poor; and (3) while there is a concentration of poverty near the center of the city, other areas of the city have similar characteristics.

Poverty-Related Circumstances

As noted in Chapter I, the interviews were conducted in such a way as to allow those being interviewed considerable control over the topics being discussed, and the emphasis placed on those topics. With such discretion, the principals, on average, chose to spend approximately one third of their total interview time talking about the poverty-related circumstances with which they saw themselves as being confronted. They felt that the presence of poverty created special circumstances in the home and community, and among the students. The principals' views are presented below under headings reflecting those three categories. Principals, however, did not view those categories as independent. In fact, they often linked the three in causal manner. That they did so is evident in many of the quotations used in this section.

Home and Community

The perceptions of principals as to the nature of the home and community circumstances of the urban poor children attending their schools reflected five themes: (1) the financial base, (2) cultural influences, (3) violence, (4) substance abuse, and (5) the milieu.

The Financial Base

All of the principals noted the difficulty in obtaining financial support for school activities from the community, either through fund-raising projects, or through direct appeals to the parents to pay for extra-curricular activities. For example,

> Our requests for extra kinds of things which would cost parents money [are] met with little success. ... And the replies are usually quite honest, "My parents said they cannot, do not, have money for this, and are not able to get this for me." So you know, they're quite sincere and open about it.

Several of the principals identified this as a source of inequity among schools:

> Just the fact that we can't charge a straight field trip fee, that we're [the school is] subsidizing them on that. It is hard to do fund raising in this community. Some schools who can raise $50,000 a year fund raising, are able to use that money in their schools. It is hard to fund raise because there is no money in the community. So we can't get that, yet we're subsidizing the field trips very heavily. And subsidizing a lot of our programs that other schools might just charge families.

A principal with ten years experience in urban poor schools made the most direct statement related to this as a source of inequity:

> I'll give you an example of a friend of mine who moved from a quasi city centre school to an outlying district school. His student council has, in their own budget, more money than his whole school had in the other one. That's scary; this is in the control of [grades] 7, 8 and 9 kids. They've got more money than he had to run his school. That's the inequity of what we're talking about. Our kids don't have access or don't have the

> potential to access those funds and resources. They don't have the community support, parental support, it's scary. Equal education is for people who live in the outer rim of the city, not equal education for those who don't.

Cultural Influences

As noted above, the urban poor populations of the schools involved in this study consisted mainly of immigrant, refugee, Native, and Canadian-born Caucasian students, with the proportion of the total population represented by any one of those groups varying from school to school. The principals felt that each of those groups had a different experience of, and response to, poverty. They made frequent references to the nature of these differences and the manner in which those differences affected students' educational experiences.

The immigrant families, most often Oriental, were generally thought to provide a positive environment, supportive of student learning. These are two of the many references to this phenomenon:

> A couple of things: number one, the fact that these people are coming from Vietnam and China and places like that -- education is number one for them, so you've got the support from the home. These parents want their kids to come to school to learn. They want their kids to get good marks, and their whole family structure supports that. The E.S.L. students that have brothers and sisters at the school, you can see the family networking here at school. They all take care of each other and they all support each other.

> The students worked pretty hard at home, especially the Oriental students, where the expectation was that they would do many hours of homework, [even] over major holidays.

Not all of the Oriental and other foreign students left the principals with the impressions conveyed above. Those who were recent refugees, most of them from Vietnam, seemed to present quite different circumstances. One principal, for example, after suggesting that the general high regard for education held by Asian families is a cultural phenomenon, remarked:

> On the other hand, there are some [for whom] that is not true. They have been in camps. They have nothing. They don't even have their own culture.

Several of the principals commented on why these children have more difficulty in school than do immigrant children:

> We are receiving students from Cambodia who are teenagers and are functionally illiterate. They have received no schooling up to this time, and they're coming in 14 and 15 years old, and that's changing our E.S.L. component to a certain extent. They -- it's presenting a different kind of deprived background, I think, than just the economic.

> This September we received a few students and some of the students we found had not been in school for more than a year, [they] had been in a refugee camp of some sort.

> [School name] has a different -- it has a large proportion of refugees from camps. And so then, not only do you have your poorness, you also have your people who are really not functional in either society, because they simply don't understand it. The cultural differences are severe.

While the principals recognized the presence of serious educational concerns among refugee students, they felt that most would be successful in the end. They were, however, not as encouraged about the future of Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students. The principal of the school which, among the schools participating in this study, served the largest proportion of refugee students, offered the following comparison:

> I could speculate where the differences are. ... First of all these people came from countries -- these countries were terribly depressed, and just coming to Canada represents an opportunity. And they have already made a change. They have already taken a step. Whereas people who have been here two or three generations, you know, the last step they took was the one that got them into where they are at. For these people [refugees] there is still promise for them. But the danger would be if in a reasonable length of time -- two or three years -- some of that doesn't rationalize itself, and then we get them going into the same kind of situation that our Canadian poor are in.

This principal felt that most refugees, although they have many hurdles to overcome, will not become entangled in the "cycle of poverty," because they see the "promise" of a better life.

Without exception, the principals felt that the most serious poverty-related problems with which they were confronted arose from the Native and Canadian-born Caucasian proportion of their communities. These comments illustrate the nature of their concerns:

> And so it's not the new Canadians, they break out of it [poverty] pretty fast. It's the old Canadians, or especially, and/or our native population. They're entrenched, and how we get them out of it, it's quite a problem. It's far beyond you and me I'd say.
>
> And as far as the white population, it's a mixed bag, but I would say that the majority are on social assistance, if not, definitely below the poverty line.
>
> I think that with the native Canadians you have all the issues that are related to families coming in off reservations, to Native families who have grown up in this area, to drug abuse, to prostitution. All of that exists within the Native and the white part of our population.
>
> The population of Native kids who are basically raising themselves -- they're really struggling because they have absolutely no support for even trying to do well. They also don't see -- I guess they see too many difficulties in their way, and they defeat themselves before they even start. They look at it and they say, "It's too hard. Why should I even try?" It's that whole thing of learned helplessness and hopelessness, where it's too difficulty to pull myself out therefore I won't do it. And they don't have any role models in their life that they can fall back on.

The principals felt that the Native and Canadian-born Caucasian poor were responsible for most of the social problems experienced in the communities. Although all of the principals expressed this, several also noted concerns about "stereotyping" due to this kind of thinking. With respect to the nature of immigrant families, for example, one principal qualified a position taken earlier:

> I think we do a dangerous thing. Yeah they value education more. Some of them do, but some of them don't. I think we need to stay away from that stereotyping.

Another principal perceived a difference among Native families :

> Oh! I should talk about the Native faction that comes from the Native families that are into their roots and their history and that sort of thing. There is that group here. Their parents have found jobs as counsellors or are working in some kind of Native organization and they have jobs, they have pride and they want their kids to do well in school.

Three of the principals made this point, noting that Native families which adhered to traditional Native values provided a much more positive and supportive environment for their children than did the Native families who had abandoned those values. They did feel, however, that most urban poor Native families had lost touch with their past.

Notwithstanding the qualification with respect to stereotyping, the principals' interviews reflected four general positions regarding "cultural influences." The first was that immigrant families tend to place a high value on education, and thus their children do very well in school. As one principal commented, because most of these children work hard and present very few social or discipline problems, they "are a delight to the teachers and to the administration." The second position was that refugee children, while their families may have similar values to those of immigrant families, have more educational difficulties due to their having lived in refugee camps for extended periods. The problem most often mentioned was that many of the students had received very little education while in the refugee camps, and thus were illiterate in their first language. However, principals generally believed that most of these students would be successful. The third position pertained to Native and Canadian-born Caucasian families. It was to these two groups that principals ascribed most of the responsibility for the social malaise of violence and substance abuse.

Violence

One principal described what was the most common theme among all of the principals' descriptions of the poverty-related circumstances of their schools:

> It is quite a violent community. That is one of the ways problems are solved. You hear it in police sirens and the contact with the police in the school, the number of times kids come to school and talk about the fighting that went on -- the physical fighting that went on. The number of unsolved crimes in this neighborhood is one of the highest in the city.

The following comments illustrate that principals perceived violence to be a frequently used and accepted means of dealing with problems in the community and at home:

> They [parents] deal with them [problems] physically. Now many of them [examples of parents dealing with problems violently], and there are many of them, but this one kind of comes to mind. It's something they talk about. You know, like a family had kids who were constantly beating up other kids. Adults in the community, a bunch of them, got together and went over with baseball bats and told the parents they'd better be gone by morning, or else. The family's gone.
>
> Some of my kids just don't know how to handle a confrontation. They handle it by fighting. They don't know that there's a different way to do that, because they've been taught at home that the way you do it is you fight, you fight your way out of it .

Several of the principals felt that the extent of violence in the community and the home was reflected in a very high incidence of child abuse. One principal, for example, guessed that, due to "physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect," there was an active child welfare file for approximately 50% of the school's families. This principal was particularly concerned about the violence perpetrated through sexual abuse:

> I wouldn't know how many incidents of sexual abuse or suspected sexual abuse that I report to social services. A lot. We have had situations where parents have been convicted of sexual abuse, to situations where kids were going to the sexual assault center for therapy -- ranging in age from kindergarten to grade six. There are a lot of kids who have been in that situation. I think that is different from other schools.

The principals felt that the prevalence of violence in the community was a destructive force with which they had great difficulty coping. This theme is explored further later in this chapter, under the heading of "The Urban Poor Student."

Substance Abuse

In explaining the difficulties that many urban poor students have in school, the principals often referred to alcohol abuse in the home. For example:

> I can look down the classes ... and see the kids that are having serious behavioral problems, and in most cases so is their academic going that way [they are also having difficulty with academic work]. And they come from families who have really difficult situations -- predominantly alcoholism.

While not mentioned as often as alcohol abuse, drug abuse was identified as a problem by four of the principals. They generally referred to alcohol and drug abuse at the same time, as for example did this principal: "In many cases there were serious problems like alcoholism and drugs in the home."

One of the principals noted that substance abuse was also a problem among students:

> It's really difficult. They're dealing with alcoholism at home. The other thing is that one of the cheapest recreation that these kids have in this neighborhood is glue sniffing. At this point I don't believe it to be illegal, they can buy the glue off the shelf ... airplane glue, paint thinner, stuff like that. And it's really hard to tell if they've been doing that unless you get close enough to smell it on their clothes, or it's fresh enough that you can smell it on their clothes.

The Milieu

The sense of the communities that can be obtained from a reading of the principals' interviews is, in some ways, qualitatively different from that which can be obtained from reading the analysis of community characteristics presented above. This may be the result of the analysis having not considered other community characteristics which were mentioned less often in the interviews, including the transient nature of the communities, prostitution, and the presence of businesses such as pawn shops. However, it may also be the result of the process of analysis, which by definition reduces phenomena to their component parts, having taken something away from the meaning of a holistic phenomenon. Perhaps some of that meaning can be restored by a consideration of the following comments:

> I think that with the Native Canadians you have all the issues that are related to families coming in off reservations, to Native families who have grown up in this area, to drug abuse, to prostitution, all of that exists within the native and the white part of our population. We have mothers who are hookers, and we have mothers who are addicts, we have fathers who are into pimping and stuff like that. That's the way it is down here.
>
> The problem probably is this business of children not feeling any sense of power over their own lives. [It] is probably one of the cruxes of the the whole problem, I think. And they feel like there's no -- they feel like they're completely boxed in, and there's no way out of this whole thing. So they learn a life style in order to survive within that. You know that ghetto kids in Harlem never get any more than four blocks away from their home, on the average before they hit [age] twelve. That's the same thing that would happen with inner city kids. They're very street-wise but they don't really know what's going on in the world. ... *But they're surrounded by constant reminders about how desperate the situation is, for example, in [community name], and I think in [community name] too, the pawn shops were always a good indication about how desperate poverty really was. So the poverty that was experienced, that they're experiencing, is that kids see all in front of them in these little stores valuable things that people had to sell in order to be able to survive, things that gave them pleasure, things that were personal, and they had to sell them.* Poor financial management? I don't give a damn what it was about. That doesn't make any difference. The fact is that they had to give these things away, and the kids are constantly confronting [this]. And they start to say to themselves what is really valuable and what is going on here? Why? Why is this happening, that people are giving away things that are important to them?

Principals of those schools closest to the city center identified the "street" subculture related to prostitution and drug dealing as a presence in their communities. One simply noted that "we operate in an area where you'd find the drug pushers, the cheapest prostitutes, the derelicts." Another principal argued that this presence had an impact on the school:

> I don't know if drug abuse or substance abuse is related to poverty, but it's an issue that we have as the kids get older. Girls and boys earning money by prostituting or doing something like that is an issue for some of the kids. And it's because it [the school] is close to the neighborhood where those kinds of things happen. ... My kids are exposed to that because they live in this neighborhood.

The same principal lamented the influence of "the street" on students who were involved in glue sniffing and other forms of substance abuse:

> If a teacher connects with the kid and can hold the kid up for a certain length of time, that works to a point. But when he leaves the school and goes back out into the street, the street has a stronger pull in the end. At least we're finding that, and that's really unfortunate. They only last in school until they're 14 or 15 years old and then they start to drop out, skip [school], and that kind of thing.

Principals generally felt that the community and home circumstances described above were related to, and evidence of, the poverty present in the communities. They also felt that many of the characteristics of urban poor students were a result of the students having been exposed to those poverty-related circumstances.

The Urban Poor Student

All of the principals described the nature of urban poor students in detail. One of the most obvious themes evident in the interview data pertains to the levels of success of poor students and the student characteristics that contributed to those levels of success.

Academic Performance

Principals made statements about the academic performance of urban poor students as a group, but often qualified those statements with additional comments about the performance of immigrant, refugee, or Native students. All but one of the principals felt that the academic performance of poor students as a group was very low. For example, one principal said:

> Overall, the abilities of the students varied from very, very low -- four or five years behind in expected grade level -- very few at

> the really top end. We considered a good student one that was up to grade level.

Another, noting that this low level of academic achievement was reflected in the results of district standardized tests, observed that the scores of "inner city schools" are generally the lowest of the schools in the district:

> We see it in standardized achievement tests. You can almost pick out the inner city schools, whatever that means, by looking at where people lie on the achievement tests.

The principal of the school, the population of which was reported as consisting of 90% immigrant students, did not report such low academic performance:

> I'm convinced, especially with the new Canadian population that we have a myth that because they are new Canadians, because they are immigrants, that they're not going to do very well. I would say that this school is an academic school. I would say that two thirds of the children, minimal would like to go to university. And last year, for instance, we monitored very carefully the academic progress of the students. And in the district exams in June which we have, ... our grade 9 students were the first in the district in math. We're also in math in the top third, [grades] 7, 8 and 9. ... We have done fairly well in our social exams and our grade 6 math exam from the district norms. ... The students know that and they want to achieve. They're very interested in school, and they're interested in receiving from the teachers.

Having stated that immigrant students did very well in school, another principal offered the following explanation:

> A couple of things: number one, the fact that these people are coming from Vietnam and China and places like that. Education is number one for them, so you've got the support from the home. These parents want their kids to come to school to learn, they want their kids to get good marks, and their whole family structure supports that.

While the principals reported high levels of academic performance among immigrant E.S.L. students, those who also had refugee E.S.L. students reported that that group did less well. This, the principals ascribed to many refugee students having had very little schooling in their countries of origin.

> Some of the kids were in grade eight and they had only two formal years of schooling, usually in refugee camps. So we had some kids that had literally twelve years of no schooling. We had some that had one or two years of schooling and they may have been in junior high.

Principals observed, however, that among poor students, the Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students achieved at the lowest levels. One principal, for example, commented:

> These children, especially the 10 per cent of the Canadian kids, the Native kids, their self esteem is perceived [by] me as very low. And their success in school is much lower then the others. Their academic success is at the lowest rung of the ladder in the school. I haven't got one -- I maybe have two Native children in the whole school from K-9 who are above the grade level on average. [There were approximately 40 Native children in the school.]

Several of the principals commented that the low achievement of urban poor students was not an indication of those students having low academic ability. One simply stated: "I don't think that because you're poor that you're dumber than the kids that have money." Another provided a more detailed explanation of the relationship between ability and academic achievement among poor students.

> Ability rating-wise, our kids are not far off average, if you just take an ability score. If you take an achievement score, I think we rank 144 out of 145 schools [second from the bottom]. And that, for me, is an indicator, not of our program, but an indicator that we really have to adapt the content to suit the kids, and that *there is lots else going on in these kids lives that influence achievement -- that it is not [just] raw ability that is influencing them.*

In making a similar point, another principal commented:

> When a child is coming to school and he hasn't had breakfast, and mom and dad have had a fight, and he's been up most of the night because there's been drinking, and stuff like that, his mind set is not exactly there for learning to read. *So those are, I believe, contributing factors to why kids don't learn school skills. They have too many other things that they have to worry about, such as basic survival.*

In summary, principals observed that, as a group, the academic performance of urban poor students was very low. Sub-groups, however, were perceived as achieving at different levels. Immigrant students were reported as performing very well, refugee students as performing less well, and Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students as performing very poorly. Several of the principals asserted that the low academic performance of their students was not due to low levels of innate ability, but to environmental influences.

When discussing the learning needs of urban poor students, principals identified a variety of student characteristics which they felt were related to the community and home environmental influences presented earlier in this chapter. With only a few exceptions, the characteristics identified were negative in the sense that the principals saw those characteristics as contributing to low academic achievement. Five themes -- student behavior, self concept, base of experiences, school readiness, and transiency -- recurred among the comments principals made about student characteristics.

Student Behavior

Several of the principals observed that whereas most middle-class children have many of the basic social skills required of children in school, many urban poor students do not. One principal, for example, noted:

> The teachers consciously say they're going to devote about the first six weeks of school to do your very basics: lining up, coming to school on time, looking after your pencils, raising your hand when you want to say something, not stealing something that's not yours. They know that they have to address those issues before they can start providing the kind of learning activities that the kids want.

The principals, however, tended to focus on the more extreme forms of student behavior. The glue sniffing mentioned earlier in this chapter is an example. But student violence and "explosiveness" were by far the most frequently mentioned behavioral concerns. These are a few of the comments related to that concern:

> One of the things we work really hard on is discipline, in terms of behavior of kids. And that is a constant thing to work on, because their first instinct to solve any kind of conflict is to hit and to worry about the consequences later.
>
> These kids, you know, many many of them, if something doesn't go their way, you know, they fight or they run. And it's teaching them that whole other set of choices that they can make, and that takes a lot of time.
>
> That shows also in the school on occasion when kids -- right in the classroom -- when two kids get ticked off and all of a sudden they're punching each other.

The principals felt that teachers spent an inordinate amount of time and energy dealing with problems related to student violence. In arguing that this is very different from what is required of the staffs of schools serving mostly middle-class children, one principal told the following story:

> My assistant principal, not this one because I have a new one this year, but I had [name of the assistant principal], he was at [name of an institution serving delinquent children] for the longest time, and then he came here. We were both here for three years. And now he's at [name of his new school]. And he told me, you know, he says, "I don't know what I'm doing at [name of new school]." He started acting [as principal] there last February. He said, "Like you know how we would spend half our day dealing with kids and choices?" And he says "I don't have any problems over here. I literally go searching in the hallways for somebody who's screwing up, and I don't find it."

Student Self Esteem

The principals felt that many of the difficulties experienced by poor students were related to most of those students having low levels of self esteem. One principal, for example, made the following observation about Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students:

> We have possible examples of sexual abuse, we have very poor attendance, and tardiness is very prevalent among them, physical appearance is very poor. They're dishevelled looking in the morning when they come in. They're mousy looking, they're embarrassed coming in late. ... And I think their self esteem is very devastated.

Two themes that recurred in principals' comments about student self esteem were "powerlessness" and "sense of failure." The comments related to powerlessness suggest that urban poor students' not seeing ways to successfully negotiate their environments affects the manner in which they interact with those environments. These comments reflect the thoughts of most of the principals:

> I guess they see too many difficulties in their way and they defeat themselves before they even start. They look at it and they say, "It's too hard. Why should I even try?" It's that whole thing of learned helplessness and hopelessness, where it's too difficult to pull myself out, therefore I won't do it.
>
> The problem probably is this business of children not feeling any sense of power over their own lives. [It] is probably one of the cruxes of the whole problem, I think. And they feel like there's no -- they feel like they're completely boxed in, and there's no way out of this whole thing. So they learn a life-style in order to survive within that.

The following comments relate to "sense of failure":

> I think it is different in other schools, probably for lots of reasons. But probably one of the most obvious ones is that by the time we get the kids in kindergarten, they have already experienced so much failure already, that they are in real jeopardy in terms of self-concept.
>
> It's like the self-fulfilling prophecy. If they don't expect someone to treat them fair, they don't expect to go home and have lunch on the table, you know, they don't expect -- when we send a notice home about a field trip -- they don't expect their mom to sign it and bring it back. It's almost as if ... they have this feeling that they're not going to be successful because nothing in their life is successful. It's almost that they accept their lot in life.

The principals felt that urban poor students experienced so much failure in their lives that many were not willing to attempt new tasks if they perceived any possibility of not being successful. One principal, who also had teaching responsibilities, illustrated this by reporting an experience of asking students to extend the techniques they had learned related to division problems with a two digit dividend to those with a three digit dividend:

> There's so many that don't believe in themselves to begin with. ... Just simple things, you know -- ask them to sit down and do a problem. Let's say in division ... you've got a three digit number in the dividend, not in the divisor. [They say],"I can't do that, from a two to a three." You say, "Whoa! You know, it's the same steps -- same process." [They answer], "I can't do it." -- bang -- pencil down -- that's it, locked out.

The only comments about positive self esteem among poor students were made in reference to Native children whose families adhered to traditional Native cultural values. In making this point, one principal referred to a Native student who was a pow-wow dancer and who proudly wore his hair in braids. The principal felt that such demonstrations of pride in the student's heritage and culture were evidence of "a very strong self-image." The principal also commented that the student was also "a very strong leader in the class." Generally, however, the principals perceived that low self esteem was a pervasive and very serious problem among urban poor students.

Experience Bases

When principals discussed the manner in which the learning needs of poor students differed from the learning needs of middle-class students, all of them made reference to the experience bases of poor students. Most principals felt that urban poor students had not had sufficient experiences upon which to build in order to learn school-related skills. Some of the principals stated that point quite directly. For example:

> And, of course, the kids who come to this school lack the experiences which their peers from a more affluent area would have had. As a result they're already handicapped.
>
> I guess the other aspect that certainly affects our education program is that many of the children really do not have a variety of outside experiences. Outside, as in experiences which other families would naturally do with their families.

One principal referred to this phenomenon as "environmental deprivation," and argued that, because many poor students had few experiences out of their immediate community,

> their whole experience input is definitely lacking. You know, they don't have [an adequate] experiential level of things for input for story writing and so on."

Several principals also noted that the absence of literature in the homes of poor students contributed to those students having limited bases of experiences. One principal, after noting that many students had few of the kinds of experiences that middle-class children have, and only limited access to literature at home, stated:

> They don't have the vocabulary, they don't have the experiences to draw from in their own personal lives. And we know that is where it has got to start -- from their personal perspectives, before we can build [on] it. Many of the experiences that our kids have are not happy ones. And sure, they could talk about those, if they can. And some of them can, and some of them can't.

The point was not just that poor students had inadequate bases of experiences. This principal was also noting that those students had *different* bases of experiences, and that many of those experiences were of such a nature that students might not be comfortable discussing them in a classroom setting. Many of those experiences were therefore not accessible as bases upon which to build student learning.

School Readiness

Although none of the principals was asked directly about school readiness, four of them chose to talk about that topic during their interviews. They all expressed a concern that most poor children beginning kindergarten do not have many of the skills that middle-class children do. For example, one principal offered the testimony of a kindergarten teacher, who the previous year had taught in a suburban school, as evidence to support an assertion that "there is no question that at the kindergarten level the kids were definitely not at an equivalent level, of kids in a suburban area." As the interview continued this principal became more specific:

> Well, when we began to ask the kids such things as, "Have you looked at books at home?, and "Have you had books? In the majority of cases ... the kids had never had the children's types of picture books that kids have. They didn't know the alphabet,

> they didn't know primary colors. And in suburban schools the kids -- they know those things when they start kindergarten. They [his urban poor students] didn't know those things, and due to the lack of not having those materials at home, the majority of parents did not sit down and read stories to the children, and they didn't look at pictures and tell stories or ask questions to the kids. And it was just a case of they had grown up playing, but they had never had the -- sort of the pre-school instruction you might say that most of the kids get [at home].

Another principal, when asked to explain a comment that poor students did not have the same level of readiness as middle-class students, replied:

> Readiness in terms [of being able] to handle the book, to listen to the story, to take the knowledge and start to build on it, from day one. That is not evident in this other group of students that we get, who don't have books at home, have never been on a field trip, have never been -- don't have the language experiences. We have lots of kids with language delay -- lots of kids with language delay that we identify in kindergarten and grade one.

The principals who spoke to this topic felt that urban poor students had not had the pre-school experiences necessary for the development of the skills they need in order to be successful during the first years of school.

Transiency

All of the principals noted that many urban poor families relocate frequently. These are some of their comments:

> Not including our 34 kindergarten kids, we had about 100 new students from June 30 to September 30, of whom I don't know very much yet -- relatively speaking.

> I don't think people really comprehend 150 kids into [school name] last year and 130 out, out of 300 children. It's just a phenomenal turnover.

> We're very transient, so we have 83 new family names in our school this year from last year.

Although the principals did not comment directly on the effects of this level of transiency on the success of students, the above statements were all made in the context of principals' discussing difficulties or concerns faced by their schools.

Middle-Class Comparisons

As reflected in some of their comments cited above, most of the principals were careful to specify that the concerns they identified were both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the concerns that might be found among middle-class students. These are some of the more general comments of that nature:

> Poverty does have quite an impact on youngsters, for example, whose parents cannot afford to take him on a holiday. I'm certain that in middle-class, upper-middle-class homes, parents would take their kids out on the Easter break and in the summer to see different places, meet different people. But when you're born into the inner city and you don't have the financial resources, it's very difficult to get to some of these places, therefore the kids are at a disadvantage.
>
> Well, middle-class kids come to you with skills. By and large middle-class kids come into your school, and by the time they [are in] the third grade they have had experiences in the home, they have had materials around, people do talk to each other. They learn to communicate.
>
> I don't know how to help Marla [a student] in language arts until I help her solve the problem of dad being in court. And that is a difference with our kids. They often sit in school and think, "Is there going to be someone home when I get home? What shape is the someone going to be in when I get home? Is there going to be food around?" And I think that that is a difference with other schools. The kids don't even think that. "Of course mom is going to be home. Or, of course the baby sitter will be there. Sure there is food. I don't have to worry about food. And that is not something I think about, so since I'm sitting in a school room, I might as well think about what the teacher is saying."

A principal who had reported that, while the school had a large proportion of poor students, it also had a large proportion (approximately 50%) of students who came from middle- and upper-middle-class families, offered the following comparison:

> A good solid third of our kids, I think, are exceptionally disadvantaged. ... It's just so obvious in our kindergarten classes. If you have a class of 20 kindergarten students, you can just walk in, and, I mean, it's visibly obvious, right away. You know what kind of home these 6 came from and what kinds of homes these 12 came from. ... What we find is that the kids that come from the disadvantaged homes don't come to school with the same social skills, the same set of coping strategies, the same value system, the same anything, as the rest of us.

Only one principal suggested that the problems faced by poor students were not qualitatively different from those faced by middle-class students. This principal did feel, however, that the problems might be more prevalent in schools which serve large proportions of poor students. After listing some of the problems facing urban poor students, then noting "but those are issues for most schools," the principal speculated:

> We're not a large school in that there's only 183 students here. ... [However], we may have as many cases as a big school like [name of a school having approximately 500 students]. It is hard to say.

Two principals suggested that poor students and middle-class students also differ with respect to the resources they have available to bring to bear in efforts to address the problems with which they are faced:

> Our kids don't have access or don't have the potential to access those funds and resources, they don't have the community support, parental support, it's scary.

> If you have money to couch it a bit, you know, then the kids can go to the shopping mall and buy themselves a Slurpee and so on. But for our kids, that wasn't even a possibility, because in inner cities, you know, usually there are no facilities ... that even take care of them after school.

Two others observed that the experience of poor children in schools that have only small proportions of poor children is different from the experience of those in schools having large proportions of poor children. Reflecting on previous experiences as principal of a school serving mostly middle-class students, one principal commented:

> In places like [name of school] and other schools of that kind, you obviously have another bunch of kids that are in difficulties outside the school. They mutually support each other. These

> kids can find each other in a new school within an hour. And they build on their weaknesses, not their strengths. Whereas [if] you put two kids into a large population of middle-class kids, that just can't happen. They will -- by osmosis if by nothing else -- [they] will learn some things from the other kids.

The following comment was made by a principal, who after having worked for a number of years in a school serving mostly urban poor children, was now principal of a school serving mostly middle-class children.

> Those kids would be trying very hard to keep all their clothes clean, the few that they have, and trying to be like the other kids which is very expensive. Thank God for these Adidas jackets, and, you know, every imitation jacket kids can wear. ... [In this school], my focus isn't on that [poverty] at all. I don't have anything to do with [it] at all, because it's a non issue for us here. Those kids could disappear, and be deprived. But we have a relatively safe pleasant environment, and these children want to be a part of that, so they're making some adjustments, which is okay too.

Although concerned that, in their efforts to be like their peers, those few poor children could go unnoticed in the school, this principal viewed the "adjustments" that those children were making as positive in the sense that the adjustments were indications that the children were fighting back against poverty. They were "challenging themselves" and "reaching higher."

Summary

To this point, the chapter has detailed principals' experiences and perceptions related to the manner in which poverty affects the characteristics of the communities, homes, and students served by their schools. The major points made with respect to the five themes related to home and community characteristics were: (1) The communities had limited financial bases from which the schools could draw when seeking funds to support field trip, swimming, and other extra-curricular programs. (2) Immigrant families generally provided positive home environments, supportive of student learning; refugee families generally provided somewhat less positive home environments; and many Native and Canadian-born Caucasian families provided home environments that were not at all supportive of student learning. (3) Violence was prevalent . Many principals viewed this as the most serious community problem. (4) Alcoholism was a common home problem. (5) Because the "milieus" of urban poor communities are holistic phenomena, they cannot be fully understood by a study of their component characteristics.

Seven themes reflecting principals' perceptions of student characteristics were presented. Principals observed that, except for immigrant students, the academic performance of poor children was very low. Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students were identified as achieving the lowest levels of academic performance. The principals felt that violence and low self esteem were the most serious problems of their poor students. They observed that violence was frequently used by students as a means of problem solving. Principals noted that most of those students did not have the range and depth of home and community experiences necessary as building blocks for school learning tasks. Related to this, but more directly pertaining to school readiness, the principals observed that many poor students had not had the pre-school experiences that would have led to their developing the skills necessary to be successful in the first years of school. They also noted that, because poor families relocate frequently, students from those families experience frequent school changes. Principals felt that many of the difficulties experienced by urban poor students are either not experienced by middle-class students, or experienced far less frequently.

Meeting the Challenges

The challenges with which the principals saw themselves having been confronted have been discussed above. Principals held various views of the extent to which they were responsible for addressing the full range of those challenges. These views influenced the programs which the principals implemented in their schools.

Principals' Perspectives on Their Responsibilities

The principals recognized that their formal responsibilities are defined by mandate as specified by Alberta Education. The comments principals made related to this official mandate, however, were most often made in a context in which they were talking about their responsibilities being much broader than those defined by mandate. For example, after arguing that the school must undertake many tasks not directly related to teaching the curriculum, one principal commented, "Don't get me wrong, as I said we have a mandate to teach the curriculum and indeed we are teaching the curriculum." The following comment illustrates the same point:

> The orientation of the staff is that we run a multi-cultural school and that's the [most] important part of our school, but it's not to overshadow why we're here. We're here to get these kids ready for high school.

All of the principals felt that their responsibilities extended far beyond the official mandate. In asserting that such an extension of responsibilities was both proper and necessary, principals referred to their personal beliefs about what constitutes high quality education, and to the compelling nature of the challenges they faced.

The following comments illustrate the manner in which the beliefs held by principals as to what constitutes high quality education affected their views of the range of their responsibilities. The first two comments suggest that schools should be concerned with the broad goal of preparing children for life:

> Do we mean by education to have kids pass grades and achievement of high academic standard or, or are educating people to live in our society? Should we focus on the broader scope rather than narrow it to the curriculum? ... In my opinion you have to address all the areas.

> We have to educate them. ... We have to teach them basically how to live. ... And I think the school, then, has to pay attention to giving them not only the skills, the reading and how to do math, but also has to help them see a different way of living.

Several of the principals felt that, in urban poor communities, the school must become the center of the community.

> I think the school is more a focus of what is going on in these communities than anything else is. The kind of thing that I would like to see is a much broader community school concept. That idea, but expanding it to bring in things like correctional facilities, to bring in things like social workers, to bring in public health on a full time basis, to have them housed in the school and located in the school.
>
> It [the school] is the only focus. There's no other place. And I think that the school is the most important community institution right now. ... Education is a whole lifetime experience, and it should be something that deals with friendships, and love and caring and so on, instead of being fragmented.

Another principal reflected on the role of education in a multi-cultural society:

> I'm firmly convinced in my own mind that by sharing one's culture we can learn to appreciate one another, we can learn to understand one another, we can learn to accept one another, and eventually learn to love one another.

Philosophical positions and beliefs such as those noted above contributed to the principals viewing their responsibilities as extending beyond those defined by mandate. Pragmatic considerations related to the challenges they faced had a similar effect. One principal, for example, noted:

> We have to keep a supply of food around. We have to keep a supply of clothes around. ... You can't not have that stuff around. Sometimes it's just part and parcel of helping these kids -- you know, feed them, and clothe them, and then see what you can do with them.

Making a similar point, another principal asserted:

> [We have to take responsibility] for everything -- for everything. That's right, I'm saying hugging kids, making sure that they're dressed, making sure that they're fed. They were absolutely deprived in that: the taking care, the grooming, all the things that you and I take for granted.

Another, after pointing out that some students often come to school hungry, improperly dressed, or upset because of home circumstances, commented:

> In addition to teaching the prescribed curriculum, because we do have a mandate to teach the curriculum, we have to identify needs, and satisfy these needs in order that effective learning will take place.

This principal was arguing that if the school did not address the basic needs of students, those students would not be successful with curriculum-related learning tasks. Another noted that the school staff felt that, because the basic needs of many students were not being met in the home and community, the school had to address those needs. They proclaimed their acceptance of those responsibilities in an interesting manner. In their school, they displayed a sign which read: *"We're not a cog in the wheel, we are the wheel."*

Several principals noted that they felt some pressure from district administrators or politicians to confine their responsibilities to those prescribed by the official mandate. As the following comments illustrate, in each case the principal believed that it is not possible to implement such a narrow view of their responsibilities.

> Because we have a number of people who are living beneath the poverty line, it boils down to a case of survival, and sometimes we have to teach survival skills. We have to look at Maslow's theory, for example. If the youngster comes to school and the youngster is hungry, the youngster would not be able to pay attention. ... And if youngsters who have come from homes where they cannot afford to dress them properly, they're cold and they'll be shivering and they won't be able to pay attention in class. ... So to me, even though the politicians say let's get back to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, what is basic to the politicians need not necessarily be basic to me. Because to me, I look at the basic, physical needs to be addressed first and once these needs are satisfied, effective learning will take place. I have no statistics to prove it, but I know. I've seen it happen.

> Maybe these things are not written in the textbook. ... Some people argue it's not part of our job, but as long as I'm in this school I will be a strong advocate for all of these things.

> [A district senior administrator] said, "What happens if you separate the problems that these kids are having in a given family with what they are doing at school." And I said, "You can't do it." I said, "I don't know how to do that. I don't know how to

> help Marla in language arts until I help her solve the problem of dad being in court."

Although the principals felt that they had no choice but to assume responsibilities that extend beyond the official mandate, several also lamented that they wished they did not have to assume some of those responsibilities. These comments reflect that point of view:

> I don't want to deal with the police and social services and public health and that end of things. But there isn't someone who is doing that, so again it comes back to me because my belief is that people are important.
>
> I would like to find a better way of helping [with] some of the families' societal problems so that I don't have to do that, [so] that I can work in an area where I prefer: working with educational programs, working with kids, working with staff, providing direction for the school. [I would like to be able to do that] instead of having to spend my time talking to the sexual assault centre, social services, policemen, all of that side of things. ... I don't have the training or the expertise.
>
> I may sound lazy, but sometimes I spend so much time phoning, "so and so's late for the fifth time," or "so and so is hungry," or "so and so came to school without a jacket and it's 10 below,"[or] "so and so should have been to the doctor three days ago and he hasn't been." There's so much of my time in doing that, it would really be nice to have a little social worker sitting in this office over here to do that. It really would.

These principals felt that the responsibility for dealing with the many family and societal problems with which they were confronted rightfully belonged to other agencies, such as Social Services. However, their views of the proper locus of responsibility notwithstanding, because they were directly confronted with those problems in their schools, the principals felt compelled to address them.

Due to their beliefs about what constitutes high quality education and to the nature of many of the poverty-related circumstances with which they were confronted, the principals defined their responsibilities as extending far beyond their official mandate. For example, all of them assumed responsibilities related to basic needs such as hunger and inadequate clothing. They also assumed central roles in assuring that issues related to child abuse and neglect were resolved. Most of the principals felt that they had no choice but to assume such responsibilities, and that doing so required great commitments of time and energy.

Making a Difference

That principals accepted responsibilities beyond the official mandate was reflected in the range of the programs they reported as having been implemented in order to address poverty-related circumstances. While they felt that the programs were necessary to ameliorate the affects of poverty on their students, they felt more strongly that the human interactions and the qualities of the people in their schools provided a greater contribution toward achieving that objective.

Poverty-Related Programming

The principals provided the information presented below in the context of their discussing the programs which they felt were *most* important to their schools' work with urban poor students. Thus, the principals did not necessarily describe all of their poverty-related programs, only those they felt to be most important. Three types of programs were mentioned more frequently than others: (1) programs related to hunger and clothing, (2) programs to improve student behavior and self esteem, and (3) programs to enrich students' experiential bases.

All but one of the principals made reference to programs aimed at assisting children satisfy needs related to hunger and clothing. The schools' "nutrition" programs ranged from those which provided children with breakfast and lunch when necessary, to those that provided each student with a small snack during the mornings. Most of the schools also had a "clothing bank," the major purpose of which was to provide for children who did not have adequate clothing for inclement weather, particularly during the winter.

Eight of the principals highlighted programs aimed at improving student behavior or self esteem. The student behavior programs were most often directed at teaching non-violent approaches to resolving conflict. One principal, for example, spoke of teaching "pro-social skills." Another described a discipline program in these terms:

> We have a student conduct policy. ... And we do a lot of role playing with the kids. You know, if [two students were involved in a kicking incident], then the kids come to a counsellor, or they go to their teacher, or they come to me. You can't just handle something like that, you know, in two minutes. You've got to devote twenty minutes or something like that, because it's got to be a learning experience, or you're wasting your time. We go back to "What were you doing? and What were you [the other student] doing? Then what did you do? What happened?" And then we go back and do it over again, making different choices along the way, so that hopefully the next time this happens they'll remember that there's another choice than hitting or kicking. We do an awful lot of that. We have to. And it works in most cases.

Most often, when the principals talked about improving self esteem, they referred to school programs in which students were recognized for achievements or contributions to the schools. This is how one such program was described:

> They love it. ... Sometimes you can get a special award just for improving, so we get a lot of kids there. Plus we have a writers-of-the-week contest where kids in grade one to grade six submit writing, and we have the grade winners plus the honorable mentions. They all come up at the assembly and they all get certificates. And we have library contests, and they all come up and get recognized. And their names go home in a home bulletin that we put out every month. So at any general assembly we can have between 70 and 80 kids recognized in this special way.

Many of the school activities which principals reported as important to influencing the development of self esteem were neither of sufficient scope nor of the type of structure that would justify labelling them "programs." The following two examples illustrate the nature of such activities:

> I stand at the door every morning to greet the kids and to say good morning to them. [I] say something nice to them and they respond by giving me a hug. And they giggle. Once they start

> laughing, they're in a different frame of mind. This has quite an effect in the classroom where they feel at ease.
>
> We constantly were on the positive. We tried to encourage parents to hug their children by saying to them, "your son and daughter was just really helpful today," or "he was really friendly this week," or "his attendance is tremendous," or "he did a beautiful piece of art work." And I would sit down on Friday nights, then from five to seven I'd make phone calls home. ... I would say, "It's the principal calling, and I would like to tell you that [the child's teacher] told me that your son has just done a superb job this week in language arts, and I think you should give him a hug. [They would reply], "Oh, is that ever nice." And on Monday the kid would come back and nudge me and say, "Called my mom and dad, eh?" and would just be -- you know -- that positive response again.

Principals felt that activities such as this, which reflect respect and caring for the children, were crucial to their urban poor students' development of positive self esteem, and to their success in school.

Nine of the principals spoke of programs aimed at widening students' bases of experience. For example, one principal commented:

> We have a very very involved link with the community. We take the students on many many different experiences: whether it's just [to a local high school] where they see an automotive shop, or hairdressing, or horticulture, or cooking; or it's [to a local business center] to see some of the shops; or to the Ukrainian Village; or Fort Edmonton; or we take them to the theater to see a play at the Citadel; or to the ballet; or to the symphony; or we bring many many different groups in. We try to enrich their education. They wouldn't get that in the home. Their parents can't afford to take them to any of these places.

Most of the principals commented on the difficulties involved in financing such "extra-curricular" programming.

Four of the principals reported programs directed at teaching their students about the various cultures represented in the communities. The principal reporting the greatest involvement in cultural programming made the following comment:

> We have taken the whole area of culture and really made it into a virtue. I believe, of course, [in] sharing one's cultural background, either through music, or literature, or dance, or whatever -- even costumes -- people wearing different types of

> clothing. ... We start off in the fall by having a community or family night where the whole family is invited to participate. They'd bring a dish from their country. And this way we -- we don't make fun of people, [or of] the type of food they eat, because we are able to sample these foods and understand why people eat certain [different] foods than others do.

Other principals reported emphasizing classroom study of various cultures and the celebration of cultural events such as Chinese New Year.

Several principals spoke of the importance of adapting the regular academic program in order to accommodate the needs of urban poor students. Four principals made such a reference when discussing language arts programs. One said:

> What we're trying to do is to build common experiences. We recognize that one thing that is lacking is experience. [Because of this], they are having problems in language development. So what we are trying to do is build common experiences for the kids that they can then, in turn, read about, write about, [and] talk about to different audiences.

As did the others, the principal who made this comment endorsed an experience-based language program which emphasized children using language in a meaningful context rather than studying it in isolation as, for example, in a phonetic approach.

Another commented on the use of effective teaching strategies:

> A good teaching strategy there [in an inner city school] is no different from a good teaching strategy anywhere. ... But it is more important, in schools that have inner city kids, for teachers to use strategies that give those kids a chance. Far more important, just for survival, and to keep them in school.

This principal felt that good teaching strategies were effective in any school, but crucial in inner city schools, where the students had fewer personal and out-of-school resources to assist them on the occasions they were confronted with ineffective teaching.

Three of the principals referred to programs designed, in the words of one of them, "to keep the kids off the street." The goal of those programs was to have the children positively engaged during times when they would otherwise be unsupervised and perhaps wandering the streets exposed to negative influences. Two of the principals had implemented after school intra-mural programs for this purpose. Another kept the school open during the summer.

The Role of Outside Agencies. Principals reported extensive involvement of outside agencies in the delivery of school-based poverty-related programs. Some outside agencies funded or provided resources for school programs, while others worked cooperatively with teachers in the delivery of programs. The following agencies were reported as providing financial or other resource assistance: the City Center Church Corporation funded many of the daily snack programs, the Food Bank provided food to supplement the daily snack programs in some schools, the Emergency Relief Center provided clothing to some schools. In addition, various principals reported having received financial assistance from service clubs and foundations, generally in support of field trip programs.

Two principals noted that some schools were working cooperatively with Alberta Social Services in order to coordinate the services that are available to urban poor children. Two others spoke of a "youth project" that had been implemented in their communities in order to assist with "high risk" children. One principal described that program as follows:

> [District name] youth project is a big part of this community. It started quite a while ago, and I don't really know how or why, but I do know that we have the director of that youth project -- he comes to our school once a week. And six of our most needy kids at the division one level, and six of our most needy kids at the division two level meet with him on a weekly basis. Today he was here over lunch, and they [the children] bring their lunch, and they sit with him. ... He does a social skills thing with them. And then after school he meets for an hour with the other group. And this program also has a follow-up on the week-end. They go there for some Saturday [programs].

The principals reported that this program was of great benefit, both to the children who participated and to their schools. The "Police Liaison Program" was another cooperative program that principals valued highly. In support of this program the city police had provided a constable to work one half day every two weeks in each of ten schools. The program focussed on teaching about the role of police in the community, on crime prevention, and on helping the children develop positive attitudes toward the police.

Making the Programs Work

The principals felt that all of the programs they described were important to the education of poor children. Many of the comments made by the principals, however, suggest that they believed that whether those programs were effective or not depended to a great extent upon factors related to the human qualities of those working in the schools. Such comments were most often made when principals were talking about the qualities of teachers, or about school atmosphere.

Teacher Qualities. Principals reported that the greatest contributions to school success were made by a few exceptional teachers. One principal made the following comment about such a teacher:

> The kindergarten teacher that I have, she's so wonderful. ... You talk about a teacher having 25 kids and meeting the individual needs. This one does, she really, really does. ... Last year we followed her set of kids. And there were kids who by March would just be learning to print their name, and there were kids who were reading in the grade two reader. And nobody was ever not challenged. Nobody was ever pressed too much. ... So that, I think, is one of the strengths of [school name], because you can't have those 25 kids in kindergarten and expect them all to be doing the same thing all at the same rate. We can't have that expectation.

All of the principals mentioned qualities that they either observed among the best teachers, or that they believed necessary for teachers to possess in order to be successful teaching urban poor children. They made most of the following comments in the course of discussing what makes their schools "work."

> The key was that the teachers took a personal interest in the kids.
>
> We had very special teachers who really cared for kids. The kids came first, and the curriculum second.

> It's just the people that we have here who work so well -- counselling, and gaining the trust of the kids, and showing support and affection, and just constantly helping out as much as they can.
>
> They're very caring people, they were the hardest working teachers I've ever seen as a group.
>
> When you're teaching and working in an inner city it has to be a total commitment.
>
> I'd say if we need committed people, we need them in the inner city. We need the kind of people that clap their hands and say lets get at it and roll up their sleeves.

As these comments reflect, the teacher qualities most often mentioned were those related to commitment to the education of urban poor students, caring for and taking a personal interest in children, and working hard.

School Atmosphere. The principals all felt that for their schools to be successful, it was necessary to develop a positive school atmosphere. Often the teacher qualities mentioned above were identified as contributing to such an atmosphere. One principal, for example, reported:

> The teachers took it upon themselves to purchase all the snacks and to prepare them. But they would come to school early in the morning and there would be four or five kids waiting to help them, and we always had student volunteers ready to help prepare the snacks and deliver them. And I think this type of thing, the sense that we did it together is the sort of family atmosphere that grew up in the school. And I think that made everything work.

The comment, "I think that made everything work," reflects the high level of importance ascribed to having a positive school atmosphere. This view was shared by all of the principals. In the words of another of them, "We tried in our way to create a climate whereby kids would want to come to school." In a similar vein, a third principal said that teachers attempted to create an atmosphere so supportive of students that "the worst thing we could do is to ask the child to leave."

The Dark Side

The programs, teacher qualities, and factors contributing to school atmosphere discussed above were all viewed by principals as contributing positively to the education of urban poor children. Not all of what the principals said during their interviews was so positive. They also spoke of negative school influences on both students and staff.

Where Is It Nice? The principals reported that there were some aspects of schooling that had negative effects on urban poor students. For example, one principal reflected on the consequences of society's expectations for children's performance which are subtly imbedded in the standard day-to-day operations of schools:

> It is a catch 22 in some ways; that they put these tremendous demands on these [children]. [We] say, "Look, you have to aspire to this life-style, because this is the better life-style for you than what you've got." And this little child in grade 3 is overwhelmed. On the one hand at school these expectations are there and he knows he can't make them, and then he goes home, and home is hell. Where is it nice?

Others made a similar point when discussing mandatory programs of standardized testing. They felt that such programs had serious negative consequences. This position can only be understood in the context of the conviction shared by most of the principals that schools with many poor students needed to approach instruction somewhat differently than schools serving mostly middle-class students. The principals believed that many urban poor children did not begin school with the same levels of school readiness as most middle-class children, and that those urban poor children remained behind grade level expectations, particularly during the elementary school years. Because of this view, most of the principals encouraged teachers to disregard the grade-level labels of classes and to adapt instruction to accommodate students' current levels of learning. This resulted in teachers often directing instruction at curriculum objectives below the grade levels in which the students were registered. For example, a "grade three" class might have been working on completing the grade two mathematics curriculum. Most principals believed that this approach to instruction led to students making good progress in school. The drawback they reported related to the performance of urban poor students at a particular grade level being compared with the performance of middle-class students due to mandatory programs of standardized testing. One principal, for example, commented:

> We're looking at the whole battery of achievement tests coming at us very soon. All designed to tell the student they can't do what everybody else is doing, not to tell them what they can do. It's a negative concept; they're doomed to failure before they start.

The point being made was that even though students may have been making fine progress in school, the results of standardized tests give them very negative messages about their abilities as learners.

Principals also talked about having some teachers on staff who held attitudes or beliefs that led them to act in ways which negatively affected poor students' chances for success in school. The most frequent observation was that some teachers project their middle-class values on poor students, and, in so doing, negatively affect the self images of students. One principal described this as a subtle process of which teachers were seldom aware:

> I think it's very difficult to bring in nice middle-class teachers into city centre and not have those middle-class teachers be imposing their views -- their values -- on the kids. [Those middle-class teachers project the message that] "you're no good, you're not capable, you're not good, you don't have this." I think that is what's coming through to the kids. ... They [the teachers] don't do that consciously, they don't think of themselves as prejudiced, but I think that in everything that they do, it's coming through.

Other principals reported that this projection of middle-class values can contribute to teacher frustration and, in some cases, to teachers giving up on poor children. In making this point, one principal observed that after having experienced the frustrations of working with poor children, some teachers start to ask themselves,

> "How can they live in this? How can they possibly not want to remove themselves from it? How can they not want to be out?"

> ... When they [the teachers] become aware of the home situations, very often [they feel] it is total loss. [They begin to think,] "I cannot do anything to help correct the situation. No matter how much I want to do good, I can't change it. I can't impact on what is going on with this kid." That gives the teacher a sense of hopelessness. When that happens the teacher tends to back away and say, "I'm not going to hassle the kid anymore. The kid's got enough hassles in their life." So [the teacher] lets the kid kind of drift along.

Another principal discussed the attitude of staff members toward the Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students:

> I feel that [for] these kids that are poor and come into our schools, there's nothing in place for them. [Among the staff there is a sense of] "if they come, they come. We'd rather they don't come, but they're here." I don't think it's considered a privilege to be there for these kids. I even see teachers say to me when they see one of these kids coming, "Are you sure [we have to take them]? Where do they live? Do they live in our boundaries?" I hear that. ... None of my staff, I don't think, consider it a wonderful privilege to teach these poor kids.

This principal believed that such an attitude led to some staff not extending the exceptional effort that is necessary to help urban poor children be successful in school.

Thus, the principals observed that within their schools, there were influences that negatively affected the likelihood of success for urban poor students. Some of those influences were "structural," such as those related to society's expectations and standardized testing. The other negative influences related to attitudes and beliefs held by some of teachers working with urban poor children.

Teacher Stress. Many of the principals felt that teachers experienced high levels of stress due to the nature of their work with poor children. Principals identified four specific sources of that stress, The first relates to two of the positive teacher qualities that were discussed earlier in this chapter: teachers' being extremely dedicated and working extremely hard. The following comments highlight the negative consequences of those very positive teacher qualities:

> They're very caring people, they were the hardest working teachers I've ever seen as a group. The unfortunate part is the stress load that they carry, is -- really it's too much. And if

> you're not really careful, I think over a period of time they can literally exhaust themselves.
>
> It's hard on the people. I really think it is, because they're carrying so much load. The teachers there aren't recognized for their tremendous output of time and energy.

The principals making those comments were concerned that the extremely heavy work loads taken on by some of the best teachers could eventually lead to those teachers "burning out." Other principals noted that teachers who wish to focus exclusively on the academic curriculum find teaching poor children to be quite stressful. These two comments illustrate that point of view:

> I could have someone come from a school like [name of a school serving mostly upper middle-class children], who maybe has not had any exposure in their whole lifetime to what you call the urban poor, or to large groups of kids that come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. And it's somewhat of a culture shock for them to come into a setting like this, because they bring with them their middle-class values and all of their expectations. And you need to re-educate them in terms of what the needs are of the children at this school. Our kids don't get taught some of the things that middle-class kids get taught at home. And so we do the teaching of that at school, and it can be frustrating sometimes for teachers who believe that they should teach curriculum and not kids.
>
> You're not going to get the real academic educator who will die here. That person dies. Dies because they can't do what they think is important, which is the academic.

Principals felt that teachers found having to deal with the full range of problems presented by poor students to be stressful. This was the most frequently mentioned source of stress.

> In many cases there were serious problems like alcoholism and drugs in the home which really made it very difficult. Health problems with the kids, our incidence of dental problems was way above the normal school. So many times we had to step in to get kids glasses, to see that they had dental care, etc. The teachers had that burden, they were carrying those loads, looking after the health aspect and everything on top of the teaching load.

> The hardest part of the job was the feeling that you're working with these horrendous problems all the time. ... It never seemed to end. Some families seemed to do all right for a while, and then it would all explode. ... That could be wearing.

> There are a great many frustrations trying to be an educator in city centre that wear the teacher out, totally exhaust them.

These comments illustrate that the principals believed that teachers experienced stress, not only because of the broad range of the problems with which they were confronted, but also because many of the problems were very severe ("horrendous problems") and because those problems always seemed to be present ("It never seemed to end.").

Principals also spoke of the discouragement of teachers due to their experiencing only limited success in efforts to help poor students deal with serious problems. One principal, for example, described a typical coping strategy in working with "problem students":

> If you've taught [in this kind of community] over a period of time, it's difficult to keep saying that these children can be helped. It's difficult to deal with it. I guess the only way they can survive is to deal with it with what they call detached concern. And that is, yes, they still care about the child, and as long as that child is trying to make an effort in their class and in school, then they're there to help. But when they're continually causing problems and denying the teacher from teaching and denying other kids from learning and denying themselves from learning, then we have to get into the dynamics of trying to work with that, and it can be discouraging, especially when you look and you see the talent and you know that it's going down the tube.

Another principal reported that lack of recognition and support from central administration contributed to teachers' feelings of frustration and isolation:

> I think that there is a general feeling on staff that there isn't enough moral support from places outside the school for what we are trying to do, and the infamous "they" downtown isn't really recognizing or supporting [us].

> I think that they feel a little bit isolated, that people don't recognize some of the problems, or some of the things that we are trying to do to accommodate the problems. It is frustrating to hear that we can't call ourselves an inner city school, or a disadvantaged school. That, if we have to use a term at all, less

> advantaged would be the one to use. When that really isn't accurate. And I think that staff feel some of that frustration.

The comments used above to illustrate the principals' perceptions of the sources of teacher stress contain references to the views of principals as to some of the ways in which that stress negatively affected the performance of teachers. Some teachers became "exhausted" or "emotionally drained," others began to show less concern for some of the difficult children, treating them with "detached concern." Some of the principals also felt that, due to the factors that contribute to stress, most teachers find it very difficult to work for long periods of time in schools serving urban poor children. For example, one commented that it is difficult for a teacher "to survive in inner city for more than four or five years, and not be totally drained, and have to go somewhere else to recharge the batteries."

Summary

Principals believed that their responsibilities extended far beyond those described in the official mandate prescribed by Alberta Education. They assumed responsibilities for addressing the needs of students in the areas of food and clothing, family problems related to child abuse and neglect, behavior and self esteem, experiential bases, and multi-cultural education. Principals noted that some of these responsibilities, particularly those related to basic needs and family problems, fall within the domains of other agencies, but that because school personnel were directly confronted by the problems, they had no choice but to assume those responsibilities.

Principals reported having implemented programs aimed at fulfilling some of the responsibilities they had assumed due to the challenges of working with urban poor children. Among these were: clothing banks, nutrition programs, student discipline programs, student training in conflict resolution, programs to recognize student achievements and positive contributions to the schools, field trip programs, cultural celebrations and, classroom cultural educational programs. Principals also reported that they received considerable assistance from outside agencies in the delivery of these programs.

While they viewed these programs as providing an important contribution to their work with poor children, the principals felt that there were more important factors that determined the levels of success of that work. One of these factors related to qualities displayed by the best teachers. Principals described those teachers as having high levels of commitment to the education of poor children, and as demonstrating great care for, and personal interest in those children. One principal commented: "They were the hardest working teachers I've ever seen." A second factor related to school atmosphere. Principals felt that to be successful in working with urban poor children, teachers had to work to create a school atmosphere so positive that children would want to come to school. One of the principals noted that the staff of the school attempted to create such a positive atmosphere that "the worst thing we could do is ask the child to leave."

Not all of the influences within the schools were reported to be as positive as those discussed above. Principals felt that some of the expectations ingrained in the traditional structures of schooling are such that they condemn many poor children to failure. Mandated programs of standardized testing were identified as a structural aspect of schooling bearing those expectations and reinforcing the sense of failure experienced by many poor children. Principals also spoke of teacher attitudes and beliefs that could negatively affect students' likelihood of success in school. These attitudes and beliefs related to some teachers' projecting middle-class values on their students, some not believing they should have to address the challenges presented by urban poor children, and others giving up due to the frustrations they experienced in working with those children.

A second negative influence that the principals reported was that teachers experienced high levels of stress. Principals felt that even some of the best teachers became "exhausted" and "emotionally drained," due to the demanding nature of the tasks they faced in working with urban poor children.

Principals' Perspectives on District-Level Policies and Practices

During the interviews, principals were asked to talk about the roles that school district-level personnel played in the education of urban poor children. They were asked whether the district had educational poverty policies in place, and about the nature and extent of the support that they received from district-level personnel. Such questions were used to explore the perceptions of principals as to the level of district support that existed at that time. This section explicates the themes that were present in the responses to those questions.

Extant District Support

When asked about district level educational poverty policies, most principals replied that no such policies were in place. The two principals who responded differently referred to broad educational policies. One felt that a district policy of decentralized budgeting and planning provided the flexibility needed to operate successfully, and that the same policy ensured that the school would receive additional funding because of the nature of urban poor students:

> We get money for multiple programs, we get money for English Second Language programs, we get money for disadvantaged kindergarten programs, we get a lot of extra money that schools that don't have these needs don't get. ... I feel really good about what the district is doing, because it does provide me with some flexibility for the kind of multiple program that we do have to put into a school like this.

Another noted that the over-riding policy of the district stated "that our children will grow in academic and interpersonal skills, and that they will grow in personal values and faith values and social responsibility and physical and mental health." The principal felt that this was sufficient to guide schooling for all children, including the poor.

Most principals, however, felt that there were no policies to address issues related to the education of the urban poor. One commented that "the need is expressed from time to time, even by district administrators, but it is an area that has not been addressed." Another speculated that the reason educational poverty policies had not been developed was that "we establish our policy and procedure for nice middle-class society," then went on to argue that "the basic kinds of policies and procedures that we have that fit all the rest of the schools, don't fit here. They don't fit city centre schools."

While most principals perceived that formal policies offered no special support for schools serving large proportions of poor children, many also commented that they did receive some additional support through informal practices and procedures not specified in policy. Several principals offered specific examples to illustrate the nature of the support they received. These examples included: district level inservice programs on Native education, an additional half-time social worker having been assigned to an area because the large number of urban poor children in the area, and readily available consultant support to assist with school initiated programs.

Other principals described special circumstances in which they received assistance from district personnel. One principal told of receiving an additional staff member even though, according to the district staffing guidelines, the student enrollment was not high enough to justify such a move:

> My [district administrator] looked at my numbers again. He was sort of sweating a little bit. "I see now," he said, "From a numbers point of view you don't warrant any more help. But knowing your situation and knowing those kids I'm going to do what I can. I'll go to the chief superintendent."

Another principal described the manner in which support from district trustees had been achieved to have the school painted:

> I had the school board members come out to have a look at the place, and that's how I got it painted. You had to play politics all the time -- get people in [to] have a look and say "look at these crappy walls, look at this furniture."

Yet another principal reported having received personnel and financial support for a school activities and field trip program:

> They'll support us virtually any way they can. ... I get breaks in many ways. [For example,] a couple of years ago in this school they had a recreation coordinator and they had ten thousand dollars. And so [they could afford] field trips and so on. But the problem with that is it's a one shot deal -- some grant money from somewhere. It seems to me that what happens is you get it and it goes. And so there's no real continuity, and that seems to be a basic problem, in our system anyway, in the inner city schools. You get it and it's gone -- you get it and it's gone.

This principal felt that district administrators did extend preferential treatment to schools serving poor children, but that they did so mostly on an ad hoc basis, and that this resulted in a lack of program continuity. The same principal raised a second concern related to this kind of preferential treatment: "There are all kinds of advantages that we have. But if you're not going to go and get it, they're just as willing to let it slide too." The point being made was that principals needed to actively lobby district administrators for support, and that failing to do so would result in district administrators' not providing any special support for the education of urban poor children.

Some principals felt that they received very little district support in their efforts to educate urban poor children. One of them, commenting on the district's decentralized budgeting system, stated that the additional resources for factors related to poverty "compensated somewhat," but not enough to make a substantial difference. Another principal said of the same budgeting system: " Even though they say that they give extra money for the inner city, I don't think they give any now." When asked: "What does your district do to address the issues related to poverty in the schools?" another principal simply responded: "Next to nothing." This response was extended to note that some district-wide programs such as "behavior programs" and "life-skills programs" were "useful" but that they were "not designed specifically for the poor." Yet another principal made the following comment:

> I think that the schools that have an urban poor population have been identified. Somehow people know what those schools are -- where they are. But there, to my knowledge, are no additional resources or funding or program support.

As these comments illustrate, the principals did not agree as to the extent to which the districts extended special support to schools serving urban poor children. One felt that the district's decentralized budgeting process provided sufficient support; others felt that it did not. Some principals believed they received substantial ad hoc support because district administrators recognized special needs of schools serving poor children; others felt they received little such support.

Desired District Support

Although many principals felt that they did receive some special support from their school districts, all but one of them felt that the districts should be providing more support . Some principals made general appeals for recognition of the difficult circumstances of urban poor schools, and for actions aimed at ameliorating those circumstances. These are three such comments:

> I think the district has to be addressing it and making some provisions to assist the schools, to address the need. To simply say that it is a concern and will be [dealt with] at some future date is simply procrastinating and this has been done for far too long.
>
> I think that it would be really nice to actually feel and receive some support from [the district administration], [so] that the staff could feel some recognition. ... And not necessarily financial support -- just something.
>
> I think that [developing a policy] presents the difficulty of labeling an area, but if that's the way the area is then let's get over that hump and get going and do something. ... So [if] it's an inner city type school, find some way of labeling [it] -- whatever it takes to form a policy. And then let's get on with it and start developing it.

The first comment reflects a principal's wish that the district, which seems to have acknowledged that there is a problem, would stop procrastinating and do something about it. The second reflects a principal's belief that any kind of district recognition of the special circumstances of the school would have a positive influence on staff. The third comment is a call for the district to get on with policymaking related to the education of poor children. The principal who made the comment felt that district staff have been reluctant to do so because the process would require labelling schools or communities as "inner city" or "disadvantaged."

Two principals felt that district personnel could provide support by lobbying various levels of government for assistance. One wanted trustees to seek financial assistance to support the programs that are needed in urban poor schools. The other felt that district personnel should put pressure on the municipality to provide adequate playground areas for poor children. They made these comments:

> I feel that each school should be examined, and look at not only the academic programs, look at the other programs that are going on and put in funding so there'll be personnel who can carry these programs. And like I say, it doesn't have to come from the district, from the school based budget. The trustees have to tap other resources from other governmental departments to be able to develop these programs.

> We need people who are going to start to use political pressure on City Hall to make sure that the kids have enough playgrounds, and have large play areas. Look at the school grounds, we just get shrunk, shrunk, shrunk. And then there's no place anymore, and you pave it over. I mean some of the inner city schools have paved, bloody playgrounds. Outrageous when you think about it.

Most of the principals felt that, because of the challenges associated with educating poor children, the districts should provide additional financial or personnel support . One simply stated, "Well, one of the ways the district could help is by providing more personnel." In expressing similar points of view, others spoke at greater length:

> I would like to see the funding allocation formula changed to help with some things. The kids are special needs kids because of some of the baggage they bring to school, and so we'd like to keep class sizes lower, because it is harder to deal with some of these kids. And in order to do that ... we make a trade-off, the way it is right now. You go for staff as opposed to resources. And I think that our kids need both. Yet you need to keep class sizes lower. I think that there needs to be something in our allocation that can help us support a low class size, but maintain

> professional resources, library books, A.V. materials, that sort of thing.
>
> I think that what they should be doing is having special allocations of funds. ... I think that if they did add some factor into the allocation which could result in additional staff, could result in establishment of breakfast and lunch programs, that each school would use that in a way that would best suit their school.

Another principal commented that, not only should the district provide more resources to allow for smaller class sizes, but that the district should also provide more specialists:

> I think you should stipulate smaller class sizes. And I think you need to bring more resource people into school, reading specialists, speech specialists particularly. A lot of children have a speech problem, but I had to sort of subsidize a speech therapist out of our budget, in order to keep her for more time than the one day a week [provided by the district].

Yet another principal thought that the district should act so as to ensure that only the best teachers are placed in schools serving poor students, and that more financial resources should be provided:

> It's a matter of training people and making sure that we have probably the best teachers available. People who have high levels of energy, and are willing to be totally committed to the process. You need administrators who are much more easy going, and willing to go [with] the punches a bit, because a school like that does require a lot of flexibility. And I think you need to make sure there's some kind of financial support in place, to make the [schools] special places, just like they are in the suburbs.

The comments provided above illustrate that most of them believed that the districts should have been providing more support for those schools faced with the challenges of educating poor children. In particular, principals desired greater financial or personnel support. They felt that such support would allow them to implement programs to address some of the challenges that they believed were not being addressed sufficiently well because of constraints imposed by the extant level of support.

Needed Programs

When the principals were asked what programs they would implement if they had sufficient resources, there was great variety among their responses. The following is a list of the programs that were identified. For each program, the number of principals who identified it is indicated in parentheses.

- Programs to enhance the experience bases of poor students. (4)
- Programs to ensure smaller class sizes for poor students. (3) Principals argued that smaller classes were necessary because of the many special needs of urban poor children. They felt that only in smaller classes could the students receive the individual attention necessary to assist them with their special needs.
- Provision of additional classroom program aides. (3) This was seen as another means for providing individual attention for poor children.
- Provision of resident social workers in the schools. (3) The social workers would assume responsibility for dealing with many of the family and societal problems that the principals and their staffs were currently dealing with themselves.
- Provision of full time counsellors or school psychologists. (2) These staff members would perform some of the same duties as school social workers, but would also provide individual counselling for students experiencing home- or school-related problems.
- Preschool programs. (2) These were identified as programs to improve children's levels of readiness for school.
- Professional development programs. (2) These programs would focus on training teachers in the skills they require to meet the challenges of teaching urban poor children.
- Programs to assist teachers with student discipline. (1) The principal who identified this program did not specify the nature of the assistance that might be provided.
- Breakfast and lunch programs. (1)
- Enhanced "community school" programs. (1) One principal felt that the school should be the centre for most of the community services available to the urban poor.

The principals were in general agreement that the districts should have been providing more support than they were for schools serving urban poor children. As evidenced by the above listing, however, there was less agreement as to how that additional support would best be translated into programs to benefit poor students. Indeed, if given the freedom to do so, each of the principals would have used additional resources differently.

Summary

Most principals felt that the districts did not have formal educational poverty policies that prescribed additional support for school serving urban poor children. Many of those same principals, however, felt that, because district level personnel recognized the nature of the challenges present in such schools, they received some additional support, on an ad hoc basis. Others felt that they received very little in the way of additional support.

Principals believed that the districts should be providing greater financial and personnel support. Principals indicated that they would use additional resources to implement programs which they believed would contribute to poor children being more successful in school.

Principals' Perspectives on the Policy Environment

Policy environments have components related to: a knowledge base, social strategies, and political will. This section of the chapter details the views of principals pertaining to each of these factors relative to the development of educational poverty policies. That is prefaced by a brief discussion of where principals believed responsibility to reside for initiating any needed changes related to the education of urban poor children.

Locus of Responsibility

Principals who suggested that major changes were needed to improve the quality of education for urban poor children were asked who they thought was responsible for initiating the changes. These are several of their responses:

- I think first of all senior administration, in addressing the needs of the students in the system, should bring it to the board's attention.
- Probably to have anything happen, the support has got to come from a senior management level or from the trustees.
- In our set up the responsibility would have to lie ultimately with the political wing, with the trustees. And it would have to be mandated from there. If it's not coming from there, it's not going to happen.
- I think that major initiatives have to be made at the provincial level. Because it is not just Edmonton. It is Calgary. It is Red Deer. It is the small towns.
- I think that there's some responsibility of the schools themselves and the people in the schools. I think that they should bring this to the attention of the [district administration]. [District administrators] should be studying the situation and then informing the board. So it should work, really, at all levels.
- Certainly the responsibility for bringing that awareness has to come, some of it from school administrators, [some] from the district administrators. At the same time, if that is the only direction that it is coming from, then that's not enough. The cry has to be coming from parents, from public, as well as district employees. The trustees are representing Joe Public to a greater extent than the employees of the district, and I don't think they are hearing it enough from Joe Public.

Principals believed that much of the responsibility for initiating changes related to the education of urban poor children belonged with district senior administrators and trustees. Some principals also ascribed responsibility to other levels. One felt that, because urban poverty is present in other municipalities, the provincial government had responsibility for taking "major initiatives." Several also noted that some of the responsibility resided with the "schools themselves." School-level staff were viewed as responsible for bringing concerns related to the education of urban poor children to the attention of district administrators. However, these examples notwithstanding, the principals felt that district administrators and trustees held the majority of the responsibility for initiating needed changes.

Knowledge

Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984) contended that for policymaking to be undertaken, those involved in the policymaking process must have accurate bases of knowledge about the nature of the policy issue they are considering. Policymakers must also agree as to what information is relevant to the issue. In this study, the policy issue pertains to the education of urban poor children, and, as noted above, those viewed by the principals as having major responsibility for initiating changes relative to that issue were district administrators and trustees. The purpose of this section, therefore, is to present the perceptions of principals as to the nature, the accuracy, and the adequacy of the information which district administrators and trustees possessed about circumstances related to the education of urban poor children.

Most of the principals commented that district administrators and trustees did not understand the nature of the problems involved in educating urban poor children. These are some of those comments:

> I think there's a tremendous ignorance of what is going on in the inner city in terms of poverty, in terms of [the] repercussions of poverty.
>
> I don't think there's a good understanding about it [poverty]. I don't think that the [senior administrators] understand it, because most of them have never really been involved in inner city, except maybe [name of a district senior administrator], but the rest of them were pretty well always serving the middle-class schools.
>
> [Researcher's question:] What needs to happen for them to move toward developing an educational policy that deals with poverty?
> [Response:] I think knowledge, [I think] that they have to be shown, this is what we have in our district. I think a lot of it is ignorance. ... I would suspect that some people don't even know there are problems.

Several principals also felt that some of the policymakers had inaccurate or incomplete knowledge. Two of those principals referred to the academic achievement of urban poor children:

> For example, tests scores, I mean they're still low, which should be a signal that there is a special problem.
>
> But if it [the generally poor academic achievement of urban poor children] came out and [was] made public, then there'd be hell to

> pay. So there's not a lot of things made public about where we really stand in our academic achievements.

Other principals felt that policymakers had inaccurately assessed the extent of the impact of urban poverty on education. One reported that district administrators believed that there were no poor children in the district:

> I know when you talk to people at [central office]., they say, "Well, there are no poor families." I say, "Excuse me, wait a minute." Because they are doing the same thing -- trying to isolate themselves. And unless they have to deal with [poverty] on a daily basis, it is easy to say "No there are no poor families."

Another principal felt that policymakers did not appreciate the severity of the problems, and that some policymakers felt that principals were "exaggerating" the concerns:

> I always got the feeling, not only from the administration, but other principals too, that when you talk about inner city problems, they always thought that you're over-exaggerating the situation, because of lack of experience on their part.

Principals also commented on the importance of disseminating accurate information. For example, one said, "The public support, I think, would be there if we could get the right type of knowledge going out to them." In making a similar point, another principal asserted:

> I think there's a tremendous need for education for our trustees and for our senior administrators. Let them get out to the schools, they don't get out to any schools, let alone ours.

This principal alluded to a circumstance which principals believed contributed to policymakers not having accurate or adequate information. That circumstance was that most policymakers were seen as having little direct contact with the urban poor or with schools serving urban poor children. Other principals made more direct references to this concern. One said of policymakers: "It is hard to get people to see it as an issue. I can talk about it, but I'm not a part of it, I'm not poor." Another stated:

> They can't have the same ownership I have because they're not here everyday, they don't see those little beautiful faces like I do -- or maybe hungry faces or hungry bellies -- they don't see that.

> But being here and knowing what's going on they -- even the trustees told me last year when they saw those parents come into the board room that couldn't speak English that had work clothes on, three trustees told me they had tears in their eyes. They wanted to save the junior high because they finally had some ownership. These are people from very poor countries, third world countries themselves, so I think ownership happens when there is some sort of a link.

This principal felt that it was incumbent upon principals to ensure that trustees and senior administrators had opportunities to learn about poverty-related educational issues through direct contact with the schools.

Two principals were concerned that policymakers consciously avoided seeking information about the education of urban poor children. One commented:

> I think maybe they don't want to know it [the effects of poverty on education]. "Don't you call me, I'll call you. If I don't know your problems then I don't have to deal with them."

Some principals felt many people bring a pejorative view of the poor to their thinking about issues related to poverty. They noted that those who believe that most poor people squander their resources are reluctant to consider providing additional assistance to the poor. These comments reflect that concern:

> I seem to be hearing a lot of, "Well if you just give these families more money, they are just going to spend more money on booze. And the kids aren't going to get anywhere anyway."

> The former minister of a certain portfolio wanted people [single welfare recipients] to live together to cut down on costs. Now that's ridiculous as far as I'm concerned. The same minster decided that senior citizens should buy food in bulk. I mean can you see these seniors lugging this food around [on]the bus? Or how? Are they going to spend the money for taxies, or what? But let's be realistic and maybe even create jobs, rather than allow people -- there's some people who don't want to be on social assistance, so let's get them back in the working force.

> I think some of it [the reluctance to develop policy] can certainly be [attributed to] impressions, public perceptions. You know, "Is this someone in need, or is it someone that has squandered the money?" That is certainly a reality. Perceptions can and do affect the kinds of assistance they can obtain.

The principals' perceptions of the nature, the accuracy, and the adequacy of the information which district administrators and trustees possessed about circumstances related to the education of urban poor children can be summarized as follows. Principals believed that district administrators and trustees (1) did not understand the problems involved in educating urban poor children, (2) were not aware of the generally low academic achievement of urban poor children, (3) did not believe that the problems were as serious as the principals believed they were, and (4) were constrained from obtaining information because they had limited direct contact with the poor or with schools serving urban poor children. Several principals also felt that a pejorative view of the poor may be included in the information that some policymakers bring to bear on issues related to the education of poor children.

Social Strategies

Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984) contended that before a policymaking process will be undertaken, those responsible for such an undertaking must be aware of social strategies that they believe will contribute to resolving the issue under consideration. The question this raises for this study is whether district administrators and trustees were aware of social strategies with potential for improving the educational outcomes of urban poor children. Principals' perceptions as to whether that was the case are presented below.

One principal noted that when talking to policymakers it was important to do more than provide them with information about the nature of the problems faced by poor children:

> I think there have to be some concrete suggestions or ideas about things we can do to help, without just saying, "Yeah, this problem exists." -- end of sentence. But [to also say], "Hey, here's some things that we'd be willing to try, and willing to document, and willing to see whether or not they make a difference." So that you're looking at it from a bit of a hopeful, optimistic perspective.

This is the view that policymakers do not act on knowledge alone; they also need to believe that there are effective strategies for intervening.

There were two different positions reflected in the comments of those principals who talked about whether policymakers knew of effective social strategies. One was that policymakers did not believe that anything could be done to improve the educational outcomes of urban poor children. One principal, for example, in speculating about how some policymakers deal with poverty-related issues said, "I hear it all the time." [I hear them say:] "I don't care about the poverty, that's something I can't solve anyway, it's beyond our scope." Another principal felt that efforts to convince policymakers that there were effective social strategies had failed:

> I don't think that we've really convinced anybody. ... We talk about it, but I don't think anybody is really convinced that their dollars will make a difference.

Yet another principal felt that the "easy solution" for some policymakers was to claim impotence with respect to poverty-related problems:

> I think the easy solution for a lot of people is [to maintain] that you really can't do anything, you can't impact on people who won't stay in one place long enough for you to do anything.

The second position reflected in the principals' comments was that some policymakers believed that the extant social strategies were meeting the needs of urban poor children, and thus that there was no need to seek other strategies. One principal simply stated, "School boards are not informed, they don't think that those kids really need much different." A second principal felt that policymakers believed that the educational system was already providing an equal opportunity for urban poor children.

> I don't think they really believe us. Or they believe that, yes, we're offering them every equal opportunity, except that those kids are just too lazy, or those kids are not as smart, or they're not as able. Or, you know, the parents are not as supportive to those kids. But we're giving them the same opportunity as we do everybody else. And that's just not true.

A third principal made a similar point by describing the nature of past conversations with trustees:

> Trustees who have been out to the school all say, "Yeah, [name of school] is a unique school all right." and to push them any further than that by asking, "Well can you support that?" They say, "Well you're doing very well the way the system is, and that is where we're going to leave it."

With respect to "social strategies" then, principals felt that many policymakers believed either that there were no social strategies that could adequately address poverty-related issues, or that the social strategies that were already in place were adequately addressing those issues.

Political Will

Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984) defined political will as "society's desire and commitment to support or modify old programs." During the interviews, most of the principals commented at length about their perceptions of the extent to which such a "desire and commitment" existed relative to issues pertaining to the education of urban poor children. They commented, not only on the level of political will that existed, but also on factors that created that extant level of political will.

None of the principals felt that there was sufficient political will to motivate district administrators to act. One principal, for example, said, "As far as I can tell, there isn't a lot of interest at the senior management level to even talk about the issue let alone move anywhere." Another, when asked what the district might do in the near future about issues related to poverty and education, simply responded, "Nothing." There were five themes evident among the comments that principals made in explaining why there was such a low level of political will. These related to the nature of poverty as an issue, the extent to which schools are successfully dealing with poverty-related issues, financial constraints, the nature of district organization, and the nature of advocacy.

The Nature of the Issue

Several principals believed that most people in Alberta were not willing to acknowledge that poverty existed in their society. One principal felt that because it was an "emotional issue," many people insisted "we don't have a poor province, we don't have a poor city." Another principal made a similar comment:

> Poverty's not a popular topic; the uneducated, welfare, social services, and so on. Deprivation is a sore [topic]. We don't like to talk about it, because we always want to be healthy, and well off. And everybody's pretending that those things don't exist, so politically it's not a good ball to carry.

A third principal commented that "I think everyone sees it as an issue, but nobody wants ownership for it." These principals were claiming that the nature of poverty as an issue contributed to there being very little political will to act relative to the issue.

The Schools are Coping

Several of the principals noted that, despite the extreme challenges facing schools serving poor children, the schools are coping. They felt that this reduced the motivation for policymakers to act. One principal expressed that point of view as follows:

> The problem is that the principals are doing, within their circumstances and contexts, a pretty good job. And they keep kids at just above a [minimum] level, and they do care about kids. They are looking after kids. I think there are few of them we [physically] lose. You know, we at least know where they are. And if we stopped doing that, and the street situation got really horrendously bad, we'd probably get some attention. But I think that people are really content to say, "You know, those guys out there are doing a really super job. Good going guys -- keep it up." And you see it is not a problem.

This belief that urban poverty will have to be manifested in serious and observable community problems before policymakers are likely to act, was shared by several principals.

Financial Constraints

One principal commented that efforts to address issues related to the education of urban poor children had been constrained by the overall depressed economy in the province, and that these economic circumstances, in addition to exacerbating societal problems related to poverty, made it more difficult to achieve funding for programs to assist the poor.

Other principals noted that efforts to redistribute educational resources in order to implement new programs for urban poor children would likely be met with stern resistance from parent groups representing relatively affluent areas. For example, one commented:

> If it is financial commitment which is going to be required, then I think we're going to get all kinds of resistance to it. And we're going to get resistance from all the parent groups. We'll get resistance from the point of view that they [would be] saying, "This is the amount of budget that we have. We want our piece of the pie." *The most vocal ones, are the ones who are going to get that.*. At the present time we [in schools serving urban poor children] do not have enough politically knowledgeable parents to go after that.

The major point being made was that parents of urban poor children were not politically active and thus did not compete for scarce resources with politically active parent groups.

Several principals also speculated that financial concerns contributed to the reluctance of trustees and district administrators to initiate new programs for poor children. One principal made four points. The first, that trustees are likely aware of "the concern," but because of economic constraints, they think, "Well, this is one area we would go to if we had greater funds." The second, that trustees would not support redistributing current resources in order to deal with poverty-related issues, but that if new funding became available they might consider acting. The third, that district administrators feel somewhat "powerless" to act because they are pulled "in so many directions" due to the many demands for resources. And the fourth point, that poverty-related issues "are brought up from time to time, [but] with all the other concerns, they just get lost." Another principal argued that district administrators would not support new initiatives in schools serving urban poor children because of fear of "opening a can of worms." By that, this principal meant that district administrators feared that if they introduced a new program for a small group of schools, they would receive pressure to implement the program district-wide, and that they would not have the resources to support such a move.

A Principle of Organization

Three of the principals from one of the school districts involved in the study commented that providing additional resources to support special programs for schools serving urban poor children would be in conflict with one of the district's principles of organization. The school district had an organizational structure emphasizing decentralized planning and budgeting. Within this structure, the responsibility for planning and implementing appropriate strategies to address the needs of the students of a particular school rested with the principal of the school. One principal made the following comment about this structure:

> The whole thrust of this district is to delegate and [thus] set the stage that will allow people to move in different directions. That is the whole thrust of decentralization. And the moment you start talking about initiatives for an area, you are pulling it back into centralization. For better or worse, that inhibits getting anything done on an issue like this.

Advocacy

Principals felt that parent advocacy was crucial to the development of political will. They made many comments about the extent to which such advocacy existed in urban poor communities. These are some of those comments:

> Education can be affected by politically vocal parents. Our parents are not politically vocal. I think policy, for the most part, is put down on paper to meet a need that has been expressed in the community. Parents are the ultimate authority, the ultimate control in education. The vocal parents are the ones who will establish what our policy is, or they will drive the senior administration to establish policy to meet their needs.

> I feel that there are certain areas of the city, areas of affluence, where people are much more vocal than the people who are in the inner city. And it seems to me that the people in these areas get whatever they want.

> The parents who should be the ones to really be letting the board and senior administration know about the situations, unfortunately, are not skilled or even aware of the channels to go through, to help out. So they tend to be fairly passive. Anything you suggest, they are usually most willing to try, but you have to suggest a specific thing for them to do.

> The government, as districts do, listens to parents. But they rarely listen to what's happening in the field, in the teaching field. So how do we get parents gung-ho and pushing for it? Do they want to display the difficulties they're having in the community and ask them for special help?

The major point that these principals were making is that causes that have "politically vocal" parents advocating them are likely to be acted upon, but that poverty-related issues do not have such advocacy. The principals felt that most parents of poor children were not aware of the procedures they would need to follow to act as advocates, that most did not have the necessary skills, and that many would not want to discuss their poverty in public.

One of the principals quoted above commented that policymakers "rarely listen to what's happening in the field." This seems to reflect a belief that educators would not be effective advocates. Another principal disagreed:

> I'm a real believer in creating political will. If there is no will, nothing is going to happen. If you want to change something then I think what we have to do is create a will. We have to convince people, sell people.

This participant believed that principals had the major responsibility for creating the political will to act on poverty-related issues; that it was their responsibility to convince senior administrators and trustees to act. Others also spoke of principals acting as advocates for poverty-related issues. Three of them noted that, in the past, "inner city schools" in their district had met on a regular basis to discuss issues that they had in common. This group had also begun to lobby district administrators for support for special programming for poor children. At the time of the interviews, however, that group was no longer meeting. In lamenting that, as part of a recent district reorganization, the inner city schools were divided among all of the district administrators' "areas," one principal commented:

> Breaking the inner city schools up into different areas has created a situation where the inner city principals don't even meet on a regular basis anymore. And there is perhaps the pressure group that might have continued to do some work. It just isn't there [anymore].

As a consequence of the reorganization, the inner city principals were no longer meeting on a regular basis, and thus, according to this principal, were no longer effective as a "pressure group." The three principals who commented on this were suspicious that their district administrators had separated them in a conscious effort to diffuse the influence they had generated as a group. One of them stated quite directly: "I think there was a concerted effort to disband us." Regardless of the circumstances and motives that led to the principals not meeting on a regular basis, the result was that, as a group, they were no longer advocating poverty-related causes. In fact, when asked during the interviews if they were aware of anyone in their school districts actively advocating poverty-related issues, the principals all replied that they were not aware of anyone who had taken on that responsibility.

Three other principals discussed a circumstance that they believed contributed to there being no effective advocacy coming from teachers and principals working with urban poor children. They observed that few people work in schools serving urban poor children for longer than four or five years. One commented: "it's almost as though it's a training ground for people to come in and see what life is like on the other side. But nobody stays with the exception of [name of a principal who has worked with urban poor children for 19 years]." This principal felt that people who intended to stay for only four or five years were unlikely to become advocates for poverty-related causes. Another principal commented on the general effect of such a short-term perspective:

> Most of us just take [a short-term perspective]: "I'm going to be principal of [name of school] maybe for three more years at most, so I will just look [ahead] for three years." We're not looking at ten, fifteen, twenty, a hundred years down the road. We think very small, and we think with tunnel vision, all of us. A politician thinks one term, a prime minister thinks one term. I'm saying as educators we have to think the long-term. These kids are our citizens, and these kids are our leaders tomorrow. What are we doing for them? These kids are going to be our problems tomorrow too. Unless we help them, every institution in our city and our province will be filled with kids that we didn't help in first grade and second grade.

The point being made was that the disposition of people to take such short-term perspectives resulted in those people not considering some of the long-range preventive programs that were necessary.

Overall, principals felt that the political will to act on issues related to the education of urban poor children was not present. Because of this, they believed that there was little chance that their districts would initiate major new programs or undertake policymaking relative to those issues in the near future.

Summary

The principals believed that most of the responsibility to initiate changes to improve the quality of education for urban poor children belonged with district administrators and trustees. Several of them also acknowledged that they had some responsibility themselves. They were responsible for bringing poverty-related educational concerns to the attention of district administrators.

Most principals felt that many trustees and district administrators had neither adequate, nor accurate, information about circumstances related to the education of urban poor children. Specifically, the principals expressed concern that many trustees and district administrators (1) were not aware of the generally low levels of academic performance of urban poor students, (2) did not believe the problems were as serious as the principals believed them to be, and (3) were constrained from developing a good understanding of poverty-related problems because they seldom came into direct contact with the poor or with schools serving urban poor children.

The principals who spoke about whether trustees and district administrators were aware of effective social strategies felt that many policymakers believed, either that there were no social strategies that could adequately address poverty-related issues, or that the social strategies that were already in place were adequately addressing those issues.

Principals also believed that there was little political will to act on poverty-related issues. They offered a number of different reasons for this: poverty is not a popular issue in Alberta; on the surface, it appears that the schools are coping; it is difficult to redistribute existing resources to support new programs; and providing additional resources to support special programs in only a few schools would conflict with a principle of organization in one of the districts. However, the most often cited explanation of why there was such a low level of political will was that parents of urban poor children were not politically active. They did not form advocacy groups, nor did they act in any other way to put pressure on policymakers.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV, "Urban Poverty and Education: Principals' Perspectives" has provided a description of the experiences and perceptions of principals pertaining to educating urban children. Major points pertaining to the five general themes related to home and community circumstances of urban poor children were : (1) the communities have a very limited financial base from which to draw when seeking funds to support school activities, (2) immigrant families generally provided positive home environments, supportive of student learning, refugee families generally provided somewhat less positive home environments, and that many Native and Canadian-born Caucasian families provided home environments that were not at all supportive of student learning, (3) violence was prevalent and had a devastating effect on the communities, (4) alcoholism and abuse of other substances was a common home problem, and (5) the "milieus" of urban poor communities are holistic phenomena which cannot be fully understood by a study of their component characteristics.

With respect to urban poor students, principals observed that, except for immigrant students, the academic performance of urban poor children was very low. Native and Canadian-born Caucasian students were identified as achieving the lowest levels of academic performance. Principals felt that the most serious problems of their urban poor students related to violence and low self esteem. When discussing the bases of experience of poor students, the principals noted that most of those students do not have the range and depth of home and community experiences necessary as building blocks for school learning tasks. Related to this, but more directly pertaining to school readiness, principals observed that many of their urban poor students had not had the preschool experiences that would have led to their developing the skills necessary for them to be successful in their first years of school. Principals also noted that because urban poor families relocate frequently, students from those families experience frequent school changes.

In their efforts to meet the challenges associated with teaching poor children, principals assumed responsibilities far beyond those prescribed by mandate. They assumed responsibilities for addressing the needs of students in the areas of hunger and clothing, family problems related to child abuse and neglect, behavior and self esteem, experiential bases, and multi-cultural education.

Principals reported having implemented programs such as: clothing banks, nutrition programs, student discipline programs, student training in conflict resolution, programs to recognize student achievements and positive contributions to the schools, field trip programs, cultural celebrations, and classroom cultural educational programs.

Principals ascribed much of their success in working with poor children to qualities displayed by their best teachers. They described those teachers as having high levels of commitment to the education of poor children, and as demonstrating great care for, and personal interest in those children. Principals also believed that, to be successful in working with poor children, school personnel had to work to create a school atmosphere so positive that children would want to come to school and to stay once they had arrived.

Principals identified several aspects of schooling that they believed had negative effects on urban poor children. A few argued that some of the expectations ingrained in the structures of schooling were such that they condemned many poor children to failure. Mandated programs of standardized testing were identified as a structural aspect of schooling bearing those expectations. Principals also spoke of teacher attitudes and beliefs that could negatively affect students' likelihood of success in school. These attitudes and beliefs related to some teachers' projecting middle-class values on their students, some not believing they should have to address the challenges presented by urban poor children, and others giving up due to the frustrations they experienced in working with those children.

A second negative influence that the principals reported was that their teachers experienced high levels of stress due to the demanding nature of the tasks they faced in working with poor children.

With respect to the manner in which school districts supported their work with urban poor children, most principals noted that there were no formal educational poverty policies that prescribed additional support for schools serving urban poor children. Many, however, noted that they received some additional support, on an ad hoc basis. Others felt that they received very little in the way of additional support.

Principals believed that the districts should be providing more financial and personnel resources to support additional programming for poor children.

The final major section of the chapter presented principals' perspectives on the policy environment. They believed that most of the responsibility to initiate changes to improve the quality of education for urban poor children belonged with district administrators and trustees.

Most, however, also felt that many trustees and district administrators did not have sufficient or accurate enough information about circumstances related to the education of urban poor children to motivate them to act. Specifically, the principals expressed concern that many trustees and district administrators (1) were not aware of the generally low levels of academic performance of urban poor students, (2) did not believe the problems were as serious as the principals believed them to be, and (3) were constrained from developing a good understanding of poverty-related problems because they seldom came into direct contact with the poor or with schools serving poor children.

Principals felt that many policymakers believed either that there were no social strategies that could adequately address poverty-related issues, or that the social strategies that were already in place were adequately addressing those issues.

They also believed that there was little political will to act on poverty-related issues. They offered a number of different reasons for this: poverty is not a popular issue in Alberta; on the surface, it appears that the schools are coping; it is difficult to redistribute existing resources to support new programs; and providing additional resources to support special programs in only a few schools would conflict with a principle of organization in one of the districts. However, principals believed that the strongest influence on there being a low level of political will was that parents of urban poor children were not politically active. They did not form advocacy groups, nor did they act in any other way to put pressure on policymakers.

CHAPTER V

URBAN POVERTY AND EDUCATION: DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter, the themes which were identified through analysis of the interview data obtained from the 15 district-level senior administrators are organized into four sections for presentation. These sections address: (1) the general climate for policymaking related to the education of urban poor children, (2) information that senior administrators brought to bear on their thinking about the education of urban poor children, (3) extant and needed policies and practices relating to the education of urban poor children, and (4) district administrators' perspectives on issues related to political will.

The General Climate for the Development of Educational Poverty Policies

Many of the senior administrators expressed opinions about the general climate pertaining to the development of educational poverty policies. They stated beliefs as to the nature of current poverty-related policy initiatives; the extent to which new educational poverty policies were needed; the likelihood that such policies would be developed; and which agencies, or which levels in the provincial educational system, were responsible for initiating policymaking related to the education of urban poor children.

Current Poverty-Related Policy Initiatives

Most senior administrators noted that the districts were not currently considering any new poverty-related initiatives. One of them offered:

> In my three years [as a senior administrator], I can recall only one time when we have talked about kids from poor families. And that would give you the extent to which we're involved in terms of considering that as a factor.

Several senior administrators from one district, however, spoke of two relatively recent initiatives that trustees had mandated through formal board motions. One of those initiatives resulted in seven "pilot projects" aimed at coordinating children's services provided by various agencies. One senior administrator described the nature of the pilot projects:

> The purpose of the projects was to look at some novel ways, more effective ways, of getting more resources into the schools to meet the needs of those type of children [urban poor]. And it does meet one of the district priorities, and that's to get other agencies involved, instead of just the school board doing this.

Not all of the pilot projects were located in schools serving large groups of urban poor children. Nevertheless, this administrator felt that the major positive effect of the projects was that they resulted in improved services for poor children. The second initiative related to a study of the feasibility of implementing a "Head Start" program in one inner city school as a pilot project. The Head Start program was to be a pre-kindergarten program for four-year old children. Here is how one senior administrator described the status of that initiative:

> The Head Start one, we haven't made any headway. We're still working on that to look at the possibility of starting something like that in the district. I believe they're just doing some preliminary sort of work, gathering information.

However, with the exception of the few who noted the initiatives related to coordinating services and Head Start, most senior administrators believed that the districts were not currently considering any poverty-related policy initiatives.

The Need for Educational Poverty Policies

Senior administrators expressed various opinions as to whether new or revised educational poverty policies were necessary. A few insisted that there was a need. Several of them felt that their districts had made some progress, but needed to make more. The following two comments illustrate the nature of their argument:

> I think there's been some progress in the last number of years in that direction, but not as much as there ought to be. ... I would like to see more progress. I'd like to see it [reflected] more in our allocations, more recognition that there are some schools that proportionately are meeting more of those types of children than others. ... I'd like to see some policy work saying that we need to put more of our resources in a preventive way in the younger children.

> I'm not saying that they [poverty-related issues] are not being addressed at all, but we need to address [them] in a more pro-active way. ... I can see that this is one area that's going to require some immediate attention.

One senior administrator was concerned that society may have been ignoring the needs of poor children, and that policy might correct that:

> It's quite possible that a policy would improve things. And maybe what we're doing, and this isn't an indication of a progressive society perhaps, is sweeping too many things under the carpet, if I can use that expression. ... I believe that the concerns and the problems related to poverty are serious enough that society as a whole ought to be addressing it.

Another believed that an educational poverty policy would be positive in the sense that "it would be an acknowledgement of something concrete ... and it would talk about district expectations as to how to address it." The administrator felt that such acknowledgement would institutionalize some of the advantages that were already extended to some schools on an ad hoc basis.

A majority of senior administrators, however, believed that there was no need for new or revised educational poverty policies. One felt that, because in the district there were informal policies that allowed schools to waive school fees and to otherwise supplement school expenses for poor children, there was no need for new or revised policy. In commenting, "Let it happen at the school level. Those people know the circumstances," this administrator was asserting that extant policies were sufficient to allow poverty-related problems to be dealt with adequately at the school level. An administrator from the other district involved in the study stated a similar position when asked whether an educational poverty policy was needed: "As far as I'm concerned, we've got it." The administrator felt that the policies underlying the district's decentralized budgeting and planning system were sufficient. In making a similar point, another administrator from the same district expressed a concern that educational poverty policies might limit the flexibility of school-level personnel in their work with urban poor children:

> If people are saying we need to have a policy in place that will make sure that every child who is such and such will get such and such a help, I fundamentally disagree with that. Because the strength of schools in the inner city is principals and staff working together and saying here is the plan for these kids. I really cannot say that I think we should be putting some strong policies in. I think there's lots of flexibility within our present system.

One of the senior administrators argued at length that an educational poverty policy was not necessary:

> I think the issue of an educational poverty policy runs head on into the issue of stigma. ... And so I would go very slow in terms of a policy statement in every area. I feel that way about multiculturalism. I feel that about poverty and many others. I think the best example I can give you of this is: We had one of our counterparts show up from Toronto. He had an 86 page policy on multiculturalism, and at the same time they had a 20 pager on a race relations commission or committee dealing with all the kinds of problems. And they were so proud. On the one hand they had a policy, and on the other hand all of the problems. My point is I'm a strong believer in being short on promises and long on delivery. ... So if you ask me on this one, *the reason that I'm somewhat hesitant -- I think I come through stronger than that -- about a policy on poverty in education is that it begins to make it a target. ... People then begin to say, "We're doing it because of policy."* In our case, when we're plugging in more money, it is not because of a policy, it is because of our belief in what we're trying to do with these youngsters. ... And I get more results that way. Because when I find people who begin to justify doing something because of policy, then the days of policy are numbered. And that's a basic belief.

This administrator felt that an educational poverty policy might stigmatize those who would be served by the policy because they would have to be identified as being poor. The major point, however, was that policies do not ensure that proper actions will follow, and that, when people start to do things only because of policy, they may not be acting in the best interest of the children they are serving.

Not all of the senior administrators stated a definite position as to whether educational poverty policies were needed. One had only questions:

> Is there something that's different that's needed in certain situations that we're not providing now, or is it just a different attitude that we need to promote? Or is it, in fact, a different service delivery. I don't know. I don't know the answers to those.

Several of the senior administrators seemed to change their positions during the interview. One, for example, asserted early in the interview:

> I think we need to consider that whole issue, which is something we haven't done. You know, I think in considering the issue and having a discussion about it we may come to a point where we may need to say, you know, our policies have to reflect that.

Later, the same administrator expressed concern that educational poverty policies might constrain school-people's flexibility:

> I just think that given the way our district is organized that we may be putting some limitations on people, when we start putting together policy statements. I just think we have done so many things in this district that if we waited for policy statements and things like that we'd never look at it. So, in my own mind, I don't see the need for having policy statements related to a lot of initiatives and things like that.

The senior administrators who expressed ambivalence seemed to see potential benefits in educational poverty policies, but also felt that such policies would, in some way, be antithetic to their districts' extant modes of operation.

Thus, senior administrators did not agree as to whether new or revised educational poverty policies were needed. Some strongly believed that such policies were needed, more believed just as strongly that they were not needed, and yet others were ambivalent.

Likelihood of the Development of Educational Poverty Policies

All but one of the district administrators expressed skepticism about the likelihood of educational poverty policies being developed in the near future. One commented:

> I think many people are far more preoccupied with their material possessions, and their material wealth, and their personal enjoyment right now, rather than ameliorating the problems of the poor. You know, we've all heard the terms such as there is going to be a war on poverty. *Well, right now I can tell you, that if there were any war started, it sure wouldn't be nuclear. They won't even be using heavy artillery as I see it.*

This administrator felt that many of the non-poor in society were so entangled in egocentric and somewhat hedonistic lifestyles that they would not consider contributing personal effort or resources to ameliorating poverty-related problems. This resulted in there being very little pressure on politicians to develop poverty policies.

When asked whether poverty policies would be developed in the near future, another senior administrator commented, "If things remain the way they are in terms of groups not approaching us, or even a group of principals not bringing it up, it isn't likely." This was a consequence of there being no strong advocacy groups lobbying policymakers for educational poverty policies.

A third senior administrator offered another explanation as to why the district was unlikely to develop educational poverty policies:

> There's such sensitivity [to] talking about segments of the population. I don't know if we'll have a policy that directly relates to poverty. But I think it's quite possible that we'll have some policy change in regards to the mandate that we take on for ourselves. And I say "for ourselves," because I believe that this board has the flexibility to initiate programs that haven't typically existed. They [the board] can deploy the allocation that they get from Alberta Education more flexibly than perhaps they have been. So I suspect that we may have policy that could influence what it is we might be able to offer poverty areas.

This administrator believed that the district would not pursue the development of educational poverty policies because that would require labelling "segments of the population." This is the same concern that was raised earlier in the chapter when "stigma" was discussed. The administrator did feel, however, that the mandate might be redefined in such a way as to allow some special programming in poverty areas.

One senior administrator believed that it was inevitable that educational poverty policies would be developed, but that such policy work would not likely occur in the near future:

> It would not surprise me at all if eventually it happens. And the reason I use the word eventually is because I believe it's going to happen out of necessity. It would be nicer if it would happen sooner before the problem gets too big. The other reason for saying eventually is that there's so much on the plate right now. We have a second language issue we've got to deal with. I mentioned the academic challenge issue we should deal with, and there are at least a half dozen "more pressing things" before we get onto the other one [poverty-related issues].

The administrator was also noting that policymakers were unable to address poverty-related issues at that time because their agendas were already full with very pressing issues.

Thus, senior administrators were unanimous in their belief that educational poverty policies would not likely be developed in the near future. One, however, felt that eventually districts would have no choice but to develop such policies.

Locus of Responsibility

Eleven of the senior administrators stated positions as to where responsibility resided for initiating any new policies or programs related to the education of urban poor children. Most noted that the official mandate of the districts did not include responsibility for addressing many poverty-related issues. They felt, however, that this did not absolve them completely of that responsibility. One of them, for example, asserted:

> It is not our legal responsibility or our mandate to solve the problems of poverty as a school system. I think that there are other agents of government responsible for that. But, by the same token, if we believe that we are our brother's keeper, then we try and do things, individually and collectively, to try and ameliorate that situation. And whether that is part of our mandate per se or not, I suspect we'll do it.

They believed that irrespective of the official mandate, the responsibility for addressing the needs of poor children should be shared among personnel at all levels in the educational system. They did not, however, all agree as to how that responsibility should be shared. Several felt that provincial ministries should have been taking leadership in the development of educational poverty policies. One of them stated, "There is a minister in those areas who could take the leadership ... . I think there are deputy ministers ... [who could take leadership]."

Most of the senior administrators, however, believed that the leadership for developing any new policies should come from the school districts. This comment reflects a belief held by most of the senior administrators:

> I don't really think things should always come from the government. I feel if there's a reason for them [educational poverty policies] to be there, we should look at them and develop them. So I guess I'm not too eager to look at somebody else to get it started.

The senior administrators placed great value on the relative autonomy of the school districts in matters of educational policymaking. They did not wish to see that eroded in any way and, therefore, felt that the leadership for developing educational poverty policies should come from within the school districts.

One of the most experienced senior administrators offered the following as a description of the manner in which the provincial government should be involved in matters related to educational poverty policies:

> Alberta Education needs to state what we're trying to achieve with youngsters, and they need to get a way to get the money distributed equitably. And to the extent that poverty is distributed throughout the Province uniformly, they don't need to set up anything special. To the extent that it is not distributed equitably, I believe they should take the initiative in seeing that the money does get to the districts that have higher incidences of poverty. The same thing [is true] within our district. We have got money. We've got poverty. If it's not distributed evenly, then we should begin to make that additional allocation. I think the one thing that Alberta Education should not do, is begin to mandate how poverty is to be treated.

Summary

Most senior administrators believed that the districts were not currently considering any new poverty-related policy initiatives. With respect to whether educational poverty policies were needed, some senior administrators strongly believed that such policies should be developed, while others believed just as strongly that there was no need. Most also noted that it was unlikely that the districts would develop educational poverty policies in the near future.

Senior administrators believed that the responsibility for initiating any new policies or programs related to the education of urban poor children should be left at the school district level, with Alberta Education assuming a supporting role.

Information that District Administrators Brought to Bear on Their Thinking About Poverty-Related Issues

Senior administrators called on their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances in order to develop arguments or to defend particular points of view. They presented data and information pertaining to the demographics of poverty in their school districts, the nature of the home and community circumstances of urban poor children, the nature of urban poor students, and the nature of the issues confronting the poor.

Demographic Information

At the beginning of the interviews, all of the senior administrators were asked for their impressions about the demographics of poverty in the school districts. The following comments illustrate the range of their responses:

- I think at one time it [poverty] was certainly much more prevalent in certain pockets of the city. However, now I think there is a much more equal distribution of it, although there are certainly parts of the city that would have little or no poverty, where others would have a greater proportion. I think that traditionally we've seen the inner city as being the area of greatest poverty. I wouldn't say that that is necessarily the case in our district. As a matter of fact, certain parts of the inner city are starting to be regenerated. And it is other areas where there is low cost housing projects of one sort or another where frequently we do face the problems of poverty.

- There is the feeling that it's inner city, and I think there is some poverty in inner city. But I also believe that it's more widely spread. ... I would say that it is interspersed throughout. I would think there may be -- I'm trying to think of what areas in the city that I would pinpoint, and I don't know that there's -- other than the general kind of inner city and surrounding, there's not -- I think it ranges widely.
- I guess my own basic belief would be that poverty would be more often found in the central part of the city. Although that is probably not as true as it might have been at some time. ... We could probably find [poverty] in various parts of the city and it may well be more widespread than it was fifteen or twenty years ago.
- I don't have any specific data, but I do have a number of schools where principals have indicated to me that there is a certain prevalence of economic poorness in the homes that their students come from. The schools are not restricted to any one area of the city. I've got schools in the city core who make that statement, and I've also got schools in the suburbs, and schools in the outlying areas, the new areas of town, where principals are making that same statement. So I believe it does exist. I can't say specifically the extent to which it does exist.

As the comments demonstrate, when the senior administrators described the extent and distribution of poverty in their districts, most of them made some reference to the "inner city." Some felt that, among all the districts in the city, the inner city had the greatest concentration of poverty. Others were not sure that was still the case. They had observed that over the past decade, the inner city had changed and that other areas in the city were showing as great, or greater, signs of poverty. All of the senior administrators did comment that poverty was distributed throughout the city. This, they believed, was due to a municipal land development policy which required that new developments include specified amounts of low income housing. Most senior administrators also believed that, in the past few decades, the number of people in the city affected by poverty had increased markedly.

Home and Community Circumstances

All of the senior administrators commented on the nature of the home and community circumstances of urban poor children. Most of them described two or three characteristics that they believed to be significant. As a group, however, the senior administrators identified quite a broad range of what they believed to be poverty-related home and community circumstances. They raised concerns related to (1) families' not caring for children's basic needs, (2) families' not having adequate financial resources to cover school-related expenses, (3) violence, (4) transiency, (5) basic family structure, and (6) support for education. Each of these is discussed below.

Five senior administrators commented that they believed some urban poor children did not have their needs related to food, clothing, and shelter met adequately at home. This is typical of their comments:

> Certainly you think of children coming [to school] without their basic needs met in terms of food and clothing, for whatever the reason. They may not be all that well looked after because their parents are having to be out scrounging a living. Or else they have parents that aren't that concerned, whatever the reasons may be. So sometimes they've had inadequate sleep, all those kinds of physical needs.

Four senior administrators observed that some families were unable to pay school fees. One of them, for example, commented:

> Where it [poverty] shows up is when we ask for money at a school and the family can't pay. And so you look at talking to the parents about, you know, can they pay for the lunch program? No they can't pay for the lunch program, so you waive that and, no they can't pay for the field trips. So you're looking at some situations within the school where you have to waive some of those fees in order to let the students be involved.

Two senior administrators felt that child abuse was more common in urban poor families. Another stated a broader concern about violence:

> A lot of that [student violence] comes from what happens at home from a very early age. ... The parents were raised where they were clouted around, and that's the only way that they've dealt with their children.

This administrator felt that violence was a common way of resolving conflict in many poor families.

Three senior administrators noted that poor families tend to be very transient. One of them described the transiency in one school as "it's like turnstiles."

The senior administrators made several observations about the nature of the basic structures of some urban poor families. Two felt that many of those families did not provide adequate supervision for their children, and thus, in the words of one of the senior administrators, "children are often on their own to fend for themselves." Two others commented that they believed poor families were often unstable. One offered that in some cases, "there is so much turmoil in the family that it would be next to impossible for the student to come to school for the thing that we think is our job [teaching and learning]." Two other senior administrators were concerned that often positive adult role models were absent in poor families.

The most frequently made comments about the home circumstances of poor children pertained to the extent of parental support for education. Two senior administrators questioned whether parents in such families valued education very highly. Others noted that it was difficult to get parental involvement in school activities. One of the senior administrators offered an explanation of the reluctance of urban poor parents to be involved in school activities: "Most of those urban poor parents are scared to death of the schools to start with, because they had a terrible time in school themselves." Others believed that many poor families did not provide a supportive environment for the language development of children. They believed that there were few books, and often not even a daily newspaper, in such homes. They also felt that there was very little adult modelling of the importance of reading. One senior administrator made this point as follows:

> The fact that my three children do well in school makes sense, they should. They have every opportunity in the world. They see people reading, they see their parents reading, they see their parents employed, they see the fact that if I do something I will perhaps get ahead in this world. And those models are not obvious in many [urban poor] situatiohs, in fact the opposite is probably closer to the truth. They may work hard, and they may see the parent work hard for a very poor wage and realize it is

> really much better, or much simpler, to pick up the welfare cheque.

This administrator felt that the home environments of many poor children not only contributed to their having difficulty with language learning tasks, but also potentially affected their beliefs about whether they could be successful in mainstream society.

Most senior administrators made only brief and very general comments about the home and community circumstances of urban poor children. One, however, spoke at some length, and in doing so, addressed most of the issues identified by the other senior administrators. These comments, therefore, are provided as a summary of this section:

> It's not uncommon with children coming from poverty situations that there are a number of stresses that affect the family: social problems, lack of resources -- financial, being one type of resource that is lacking. Very often parents are not in high paying positions and do not have the type of training or education that would allow them to be. More commonly you'll find social assistance, and the [related] problems of not feeling productive, not feeling like you're contributing to your society, and some of the, perhaps, self concept difficulties that come with that. Sometimes you'll find some secondary and very serious problems, for example: alcoholism, drug abuse, increased incidence of physical abuse. Sometimes that's between parents, but on occasion, I suppose, children as well. ... Sexual abuse as well may be somewhat more likely. ... Lack of rest. Routines aren't well established at home. I think very often these children are loved by their parents, but the parents are less capable of being able to be consistently loving and caring. So I think children are more often on their own to fend for themselves than middle class school children are. Less literacy exposure, fewer books, few magazines, probably a fair amount of television. [There] may not be much listening to music or radio, which I think is useful in developing auditory memory. Lack of stimulation in general. Are there the experiences? Some of our children are off to Europe at the age of 3 years old. Some of these children will be fortunate to get out of Edmonton at all.

More than a decade earlier, this senior administrator had taught in an inner city school. Experiences such as that reported below greatly affected this administrator's thinking about the home and community circumstances of poor children:

> One day a little Native girl arrived at school late, which she often did. [When she] came in, we were in the corner having a small group session. She went to her desk and she stayed there. I

> invited her to join us. She shook her head, "no." Recess came and I let everybody go, and she stayed in her desk. I went and I sat beside her and tried to talk to her. Her head remained down, as it very often was. Lucy spent most of her life at the Saddle Lake reserve. She was living with her mother in town at the time. I asked her what was wrong and she said, "My mother died last night." I said "pardon me", and she said, "My mom fell down the stairs and died." I asked her more questions about it and what she told me was that her mother was intoxicated, she fell down the stairs and she broke her neck. And Lucy was the only one at home with her, and Lucy was alone with her all night until early in the morning. And then Lucy got up and went and got help. So she was late for school because she witnessed her mother being taken away, the police arrival, the ambulance. Now that had such an impact on me in terms of just how desperate a need there is for some children. And I think that was related to the poverty environment that she lived in.

Student Characteristics

Most senior administrators spoke of student characteristics and home and community circumstances as though they were linked in a causal manner, with home and community circumstances responsible for many of the student difficulties they identified. That they perceived such a relationship is evident in many of the quotations used below in presenting the themes pertaining to the views of senior administrators on the nature and characteristics of urban poor students.

During the interviews all of the senior administrators were asked the following two questions in order to gain their perspectives on the nature of urban poor students: (1) What information do you have about the academic performance of urban poor children in your district? and (2) Are you aware of any learning needs that urban poor children have that, perhaps, most middle class children do not have? Whatever their answers, the senior administrators were asked to extend or elaborate until the researcher "sensed" that they had no more to say. To a great extent, this section is based on the responses of senior administrators to these questions.

Academic Achievement

Most of the senior administrators professed to have no precise data about the academic achievement of urban poor children. However, they all had impressions which they were willing to share. These comments illustrate the nature of those impressions:

> I don't have any particularly data, but I would certainly suspect that they wouldn't do as well, for the simple fact that if you don't have appropriate physical conditions to live in where there is basic food, shelter, clothing, and health services available to you, then it is a lot more difficult for those students to perform.

> I think it would be very difficult to generalize. I think that youngsters usually do well in school if the family regards education as important. I don't think you could tie it back to their economic standing.

> We know that the kids at [an inner city school] school don't perform like the kids at [an upper middle class school].

> I would think probably the socio-economic factor is the best determinant of success.

All but one of the senior administrators believed that the academic performance of poor children was generally very low relative to the performance of middle class children. One of them even suggested that data were available to support such a conclusion:

> I think we probably do [have data about achievement]. I bet if you were to take grade 3, 6 and 9 achievement tests and rank schools according to achievement, I know what schools you'd find at the bottom.

This administrator believed that if schools were ranked according to achievement on standardized tests, the urban poor schools would be at the bottom of that ranking. Another senior administrator was careful to point out that, while the academic achievement of many poor children was very low, there were some who did quite well:

> I have to be careful not to generalize and say that all children coming from an urban poor setting are going to have difficulties, because that is not true. But certainly there is a high proportion of that, I think the evidence supports that, and certainly my observations support that.

Other Characteristics

The senior administrators said very little about the nature of poor students. Most often, their comments about students were confined to references to low academic achievement, and to their perceptions of the home and community circumstances that they felt caused the low achievement. This is an example of that type of comment:

> If there is an impoverishment in the home due to, perhaps, the learning level of the parents, or the monies they have available to do certain things like read newspapers and buy magazines or movies or whatever it might be -- if those things are lacking, they're bound to have a negative impact on our students. Now the degree of that negative impact is something which, of course, needs some study. And I don't have a very good opinion as to what that impact is, although certainly the literature I've read tells me that there's a strong relationship between the poverty level and the learning level of kids in schools.

There were, however, isolated comments about other characteristics of poor students. These are discussed below.

Three of the senior administrators raised concerns related to the self esteem of urban poor children. Two of them only noted that it might be a concern. The other explained:

> I think another factor that comes into play is, perhaps, the self concept of the child. If he or she sees himself or herself as economically deprived in some way, perhaps there's a sense of hopelessness involved. And so when they come to school they ask themselves, "Why should I do this? Why should I work? I'm beat before I start." It has an effect on the self concept of the child.

The administrator felt that, because some poor students were unable to see a way to escape from poverty, a sense of hopelessness could become entrenched in their self concepts.

One senior administrator was concerned about the behavior of urban poor children:

> Something that comes to mind is the behavior of the children. And if they don't know how to socially interact with other children or with the teacher as an adult, it makes it very difficult for that child to learn.

The administrator felt that many poor children did not interact positively with their peers or teachers, and that this impaired their ability to succeed in school. Another senior administrator relayed a story to illustrate a concern about delinquent behavior among poor children:

> As I walked into the school there was a couple of grade 3 [students] that were going to sell me some hot merchandise. First of all [they] were not really concerned who I was or anything else. I chatted with them for awhile. I found out that they had snuck into the store next door, because they have a court order or injunction preventing these little guys from coming into the store, and they're only in grade 3. So at grade 3 they've already been prohibited from the local businesses by law. You know those sorts of things [are] happening. It's a little bit scary.

One other district administrator observed that not all urban poor students displayed the same characteristics:

> We have a number of new immigrants who have just come into the country very recently, and who attend school regularly, and do very well in general. They are academically oriented, they want to succeed, and the attitude to succeed is there. Then we go to some other schools where there's a different attitude towards school achievement and working in school and that translates into things like attendance, for example. Attendance may be quite irregular. ... That's a different category, I think, of lower socio-economic group. And I guess basically it would translate into those two broad categories.

This administrator felt that immigrant poor children generally had very positive attitudes toward school, and were usually very successful, but that other groups of poor students tended to have negative attitudes toward school and to experience little success.

One senior administrator made the following comparisons in order to illustrate an important characteristic of poor students:

> My children will go to school with warm clothes, have some food in their mouths, and probably have lunches, and probably know that there's a baby sitter for them when they get home, and [that all the] other lower level basic needs are being looked after. Therefore, they don't spend much time worrying about that. And their energies, their intelligences, are being focused in on some kind of learning. With a lot of the kids who are poor, all the things I talked about are the primary focus. And we have to do tremendous things in our schools to provide a very safe environment for those kids so they can start to maybe push aside all that stuff, and get to the core of why those kids are in school, but it takes some time. I think that has got to be the basic

> difference. And so we observe, I'm sure, a lot more learning disabilities or kids who have two or three years developmental lags. Often times developmental lags are based on experience. I think there's a difference.

The administrator was arguing that, out of necessity, many poor children expend much of their emotional and intellectual energy on concerns related to their basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing, and that this resulted in many students not being able to attend successfully to school-related tasks.

As noted above, these concerns were raised by only a few of the senior administrators. The one concern about the nature of urban poor students that almost all of them voiced related to low academic achievement.

Nature of the Issues Confronting the Poor

The preceding discussion of senior administrators' perceptions of the characteristics of urban poor students and of the nature of those students' home and community circumstances partially defines their understanding of issues confronting the poor. So as to provide a more complete picture of their understanding of those issues, this section explores three related themes that were evident in the interview data. These pertain to: (1) the general nature of poverty-related issues, (2) the severity of poverty-related issues, and (3) the urban poor and their relationship to society.

The General Nature of Poverty-Related Issues

In discussing the general nature of poverty-related issues, several senior administrators noted a phenomenon related to the concentration of poverty in an area. These are two of their comments:

> I think probably that [the inner city] is where we have the largest concentration of poverty and it's a different kind of poverty, in the sense [that] there's so much of it, it becomes more the average, as opposed to other places where it can be the exception. And I think there's some different dynamics that relate to it because of that.

> People are going to say that you've got poor in every school. But I think when you get a large number of poor together you create an ethos or a climate that you're not dealing with when you've got a few poor kids in a middle class school.

These senior administrators believed that, in schools where there were large concentrations of urban poor children, there was a negative synergistic interaction among poverty-related concerns. This, they felt, resulted in "some different dynamics" or an "ethos" that made the issues more difficult to address successfully.

One senior administrator argued that defining the issue as one of poverty was not useful:

> I guess the whole question of what attention should public schools be paying to the issue of poverty is, at this point for me, not defined in a way that's helpful to me in the job that I have to do. I guess my concern is that ... we're using that as a proxy for something else. ... It seems to me that if all we do is concentrate on a dollar number and say those below it, that's poverty and above it it isn't, that we may not be helping ourselves and kids that are in that situation as much as we would if we got beyond what the proxy was for. Because it seems to me that there may well be kids in families where the income is below [the poverty line] who, in terms of the opportunities that their parents give them, might be in superb shape. And [there are] other kids in a situation where the family income is three times that where, in fact, there is deprivation.
>
> Once we've got it [poverty] broken down, then I believe we have something we can deal with. We can say yes, that's real, and that's not real. We can say that's ours, and that's somebody else's. But it gives people a chance then to start to look at, "Is it really a problem, or is it perception?" recognizing that the perception may be real too. But it gives people a way of starting to deal with it.

From this administrator's point of view, "poverty" was so broad an issue that it actually camouflaged the educational concerns that could be addressed.

The Severity of Poverty-Related Issues

Several senior administrators stated beliefs about the severity of poverty-related issues. Three compared poverty in Alberta with poverty in other areas. These are their comments:

> When we look at the national scale, you also look at the international scale, how bad is our poverty compared with poverty in other countries? And I guess by comparison our poorest people would be regarded as very well to do people in certain other societies, so you must keep it relative.
>
> And I think that within our province, poverty and being poor are relative terms. All you have to do is go and travel the world and come back and find out how fortunate we are.
>
> And I think compared to many urban areas, older urban areas of other cities, be it Toronto, or more particularly across the line [in the United States], the spread in wealth is less with us, than it is with many of the more mature cities. But we certainly have it [poverty].

These senior administrators acknowledged that there was poverty in Alberta. They felt, however, that the poverty in Alberta was far less extreme than in other areas.

Some of the senior administrators felt that poor students did not necessarily experience greater problems than others. One of them noted that such a belief was held by some of the trustees:

> I know that we have trustees, one in particular, who, when she hears people say, "These kids are poor, therefore they don't do well." says "nonsense." She knows all kinds of poor people who did well. She looks back at her own experience where her family didn't have much money and says, "We did well."

Another senior administrator expressed a similar point of view as follows:

> I think the real dilemma that the district is in is not in terms of economic poverty, but many youngsters coming from homes that I would call poor in terms of atmosphere at home. That would be a greater concern than the economic thing.

They were arguing that many of the problems that are often associated with poverty are just as prevalent among, and have just as serious consequences for, middle and upper middle class students. Most senior administrators, however, believed otherwise. These comments reflect their points of view:

> What are the ways we look at for getting ahead in our society? Education, a good job, or inherited wealth. The poor don't have inherited wealth. They generally don't have the same educational background as others, and don't have the resources

> to get it. The third one is a good job. If you don't have the educational background, you can't get a good job really. So I think those things are stacked against them.
>
> I suppose the bleakness that I sense when I think about poverty in education is almost a feeling of hopelessness. I feel like I've worked in the schools where poverty existed extensively, because most of my teaching was in inner city type schools. I feel like the problems are so complex, [and] that as an education institution, we felt it very directly, but have not had the power or the wherewithal to deal with it.

These senior administrators believed that the poverty-related issues confronting the districts were serious indeed. The second of them, in particular, wondered whether the district was capable of dealing with those issues.

The Urban Poor and Their Relationship to Society

Some of the senior administrators expressed particular points of view about the general nature of the poor. One seemed to believe that many of the poor were "shiftless abusers" of the social welfare system. After complaining that the poor were often "approaching social services for assistance and sometimes they take things for granted," the administrator provided an example to illustrate the point:

> The ones that are on social services often are picking up the best pair of running shoes, the best of equipment. And yet, on the other hand, we have others that probably are coming from backgrounds that are even more impoverished, yet they're making do with used equipment or hand me downs or whatever. So you start talking about poverty, there is difficulty reconciling what it really is.

This administrator felt that many of those who are currently poor do not have the same drive to escape poverty as did the poor in decades past:

> Well I guess it can be argued that whatever applied thirty, forty years ago isn't really relevant today. I don't buy it. They didn't consider themselves poor. And yet, through effort and motivation, they all tried to improve themselves. And is it [poverty] a state of mind to some extent?

Another senior administrator, who himself held quite a different belief, noted that a similar view of the poor was prevalent in society:

> One of the assumptions right now that is increasingly being prattled about is that people that are on welfare are bums or always ripping off the government, and do nothing but go and have a zillion children, don't work, drink, and refuse to change.

The administrator believed that this view was largely responsible for many people's not being willing to "become involved in fighting poverty."

Most of the senior administrators did not express such a pejorative view of the poor. Many felt that poverty was an extremely stressful lifestyle with which most of the poor were doing their best to cope. One senior administrator made that point as follows:

> In lots of cases, particularly in the case of single parent families, just the sheer energy that it takes to exist. By the time that parent is home with two or three kids to put to bed, even if they're trying to attend to other needs, they haven't got time to go out to parent meetings and things like that. They're trying to keep body and soul together themselves in their family.

Some senior administrators referred to the nature of relationships between the non-poor and the poor in society. Several believed that most of the non-poor in society were not at all aware of the extent and the nature of poverty. One of them, for example, said:

> If I'm out at a social gathering and I talk to people who are non-educators, they can hardly believe that those things happen. And I say, "That's not unique in this one situation. There are a number of kids that come from that kind of a family situation." Some people just have no idea, none whatsoever.

Another offered an explanation of that lack of awareness:

> As the city gets bigger and larger, we don't see it to the same extent we saw when we were living in a smaller community. You know, keep those people in one section of the city and out of sight, and they will be out of our minds.

The structure of society was such that the non-poor seldom had contact with the poor, and thus were not aware of the circumstances of the poor.

One senior administrator argued that poverty will always exist in society:

> The poor will always be with us, because no matter how we upgrade [there will be] those that are on the lesser side of the scale. It's all relative. I think any society always has the haves and the have nots.

This administrator felt that poverty was purely a relative matter, and that the poor were simply those who have the least in any society. Another senior administrator offered a different perspective on the nature of the relationship between the structure of society and the poor:

> I think that right now what we have is a small affluent group living off the best of the land, and an increasingly larger poverty-ridden group not sharing equally in the benefits of our society. Now people can say, "Well those who are in fact succeeding have worked hard and consequently deserve it, and the poor are lazy and that's why they're that way." I don't buy those assumptions. I think that there is a lot of evidence ... that you can have a group which is very very affluent , and a huge group which is almost held in subjugation in order to support the lifestyle of a few.

This administrator contended that society was structured in such a way that the poor were exploited in order to maintain the lifestyles of the wealthy, and that this structure was largely responsible for many of the poor being unable to escape from poverty.

As the above comments illustrate, the senior administrators had divergent views about both the nature of the poor and the nature of society's relationship to the poor. Some seemed to believe that the poor were responsible for their own circumstances and could better themselves if they chose, while others seemed to believe that structures in society were responsible for poverty and that the poor were not likely to be able to overcome the effects of those structures.

Summary

The senior administrators felt that poverty was becoming more prevalent, and that it existed in all areas of the city. They also agreed that some regions, including the inner city, had greater concentrations of poverty than others.

Generally, the senior administrators made few and brief comments about home and community circumstances of urban poor children. Some felt that, in many urban poor families, the needs of the children for food, clothing, and shelter were not adequately met. Others raised concerns about transiency, family violence, and generally unstable family structures. However, the matter raised most frequently by the senior administrators related to their concern that many urban poor parents do not provide home environments supportive of student learning.

All but one of the senior administrators believed that the academic achievement of urban poor students was very low. Most of the senior administrators said very little else about the nature of urban poor students. Individuals, however, did raise concerns about student self esteem and behavior.

The senior administrators expressed disparate views about the nature of the issues confronting the poor. Some felt that the problems the poor faced were very serious and difficult to overcome, while others felt that the problems were not as serious and could be overcome if the the poor were only willing to extend the necessary effort.

Addressing the Needs of Urban Poor Students

This section of the chapter explicates themes related to the perspectives of senior administrators on the manner in which the needs of urban poor children were being addressed. Three topics are explored: (1) district responsibilities for the education of urban poor children, (2) policies and practices that were currently in place, and (3) necessary or desirable policies and practices.

District Responsibilities for the Education of Urban Poor Children

All the senior administrators raised concerns related to the legislated mandate of the school districts. They were all concerned that addressing some of the needs of poor children would require that the districts assume responsibilities not within that formal mandate, which several noted was limited to providing "basic education." Three argued that the school districts ought to confine their activities to those defined by the mandate. One of them, for example, commented:

> If people are in need, people require assistance, then deliver that through some other social service program, but don't get the school involved. ... To start getting into the broader social service context would be inappropriate.

Another stated, "There's a point where maybe as schools we have to recognize we have a certain limited role. We can't solve all the problems of society."

Two senior administrators argued that they had responsibilities beyond those prescribed by mandate:

> Everyone associated with children, and the education of children [has responsibility for the education of urban poor children], otherwise we're passing the buck, saying, "Let so and so do it." I think that we have a degree of responsibility, even though it is not formally in the mandate of the district.

> On the one hand I can say, "That's none of my business." On the other hand, our business is child development and growth. And when a youngster shows up with other conditions that interfere with his learning, with his development, then there is no way that we can say that that is not something that we should be doing, and have got to be doing.

They felt that, irrespective of district mandate, educators were responsible for addressing some of the special needs of poor students. Another senior administrator noted a consequence of schools' assuming such responsibilities:

> School teachers who are concerned with the well being of the student who comes to school hungry and comes to school without clothing say, "Before I can start to do my job, I've got to make sure the kid is fed and clothed and warm." And I agree. But if we keep doing that, then nobody else in the world worries that the kid is fed and warm and clothed. And we end up spending all of our time on something that should be the responsibility of someone else, and never deliver on the job that we got the money to deliver on.

Because schools were extending efforts to assist students in meeting basic needs, other agencies with formal responsibilities related to those needs had withdrawn services and allowed the schools to carry much of the responsibility. The administrator felt that this impaired the ability of the district to successfully perform mandated duties. Two other senior administrators made similar comments:

> I think education has been saddled with more and more responsibilities which have traditionally been held in other departments of government, and consequently, they have transferred those costs from either the provincial level or the federal level to the local school district level, and the local tax payer. And I don't know that that is particularly fair.
>
> I'm distressed when I hear of things in the community where the social services agencies are saying, "Don't intervene in a family situation, the school will look after it." when I honestly believe that it is the social services agency that should be intervening. I mean, when a kid is being beaten at home, and mother is doing something or father is doing something at home, and the social services agency says to the kid,"Go and talk to your school counsellor." I just have some trouble with that, because I believe we're being over-burdened.

All of these senior administrators felt that other agencies, such as Social Services, were not fulfilling their responsibilities to poor children. At the same time, they felt that school districts were already overloaded with responsibilities, and could take on no more. Several senior administrators noted that this was a function of available financial resources. One of them commented:

> I think we're limited by the resources that we have. Our first mandate is to provide a basic education program, basic schooling. It's difficult to go into those other areas, even though we recognize a need.

Another senior administrator made the following statement:

> The role of educators in our society is to provide an education to kids between the age of 5 1/2 and 19. I subscribe to that belief. When it gets into the other parts of the child's development, including the daycare, their physical growth, their social growth, psychological services, and all those areas, *I believe that the community at large ought to take responsibility for it, pay for it and promote it. That hasn't been happening, in my view, as much as should have been. Therefore, by default, somebody ought to step into the breach. I don't think anybody is in a better position than our schools.*

This administrator felt that schools could do an excellent job of providing comprehensive services to poor children, but that do so, they would need additional resources, and that those resources should be diverted from existing agencies whose mandates included responsibility for urban poor children.

Issues related to mandate were central to senior administrators' thinking about initiating poverty-related policies and programs. All of them had reservations about assuming responsibilities that did not pertain directly to basic education. Most also believed that poor children had needs that were not being adequately addressed, and that schools could address those needs. However, they were reluctant to take on tasks that they believed were more correctly the responsibility of other agencies.

Extant Policies and Practices

The senior administrators noted that their districts had no formal educational poverty policies. Many of them, however, contended that some district policies offered guidance and support for those charged with educating urban poor children. One referred to a district policy of offering "a universal free education." In asserting that extant policy provided guidance for the education of all children, including the poor, another commented:

> The basic policy of our school district involves our mission statement ... in which we address students in a broad sense, in terms of providing education for them. We look at the educational needs and we strive for educational excellence. We look at the total social, emotional, and physical development of the youngster.

Other senior administrators spoke of two types of policies that, although not designed specifically to do so, provided advantages to schools serving poor children. The most frequently mentioned of these policies was that, in both districts, student fees for services such as the rental of textbooks could be waived at the discretion of school principals. Some of the senior administrators from one of the school districts commented on the effects of policies and practices associated with a decentralized budgeting and planning system. They suggested that the formula for allocation of resources within that system ensured that schools serving large populations of poor students received more funding than other schools. They noted that such schools receive extra money due to "transiency" (the number of students transferring into the school during the academic year) and due to a "disadvantaged school" grant. These senior administrators also felt that the flexibility which decentralized budgeting and planning afforded, enabled schools to adapt to poverty-related circumstances.

Many of the senior administrators noted that, in the absence of educational poverty policies, they extended additional support to schools serving poor students on an informal basis. They felt that a predisposition toward providing such support existed as an "informal policy" within their districts. One of them, for example, commented, "that policy, even though it's not written, is there as a belief system." Many of the senior administrators talked about the nature of this informal support. Two of them from the same district noted that they had what they referred to as "discretionary funds," which allowed them to provide additional financial resources to schools serving urban poor students. One of them commented:

> We'll look at schools, for example, [name of school]. We'll fund them differentially, not because of any policy or whatever, but it's because, as a senior administrator, I've got some extra monies in the budgets, and I would just turn around and give them a grant, a one shot grant. It might be an extra 5,000 dollars, or 10,000 dollars. We basically subsidize them from a central point of view.

The same senior administrator told of intervening in what was perceived to be an extremely serious circumstance:

> One hundred percent [of the students in the school] come from subsidized housing next door. ... So that situation, for instance, finally reached a stage that it was not a matter of special education assistance in this grade level, or resource room at that [level], we simply designated the school as a special education school, even though it's a regular school. But we staffed it additionally, we gave it additional resources, we provided

> monies for kids to get out of their community and into the greater community.

While only a few senior administrators spoke of providing additional funds to schools serving poor students, most of them did note that such schools were given special consideration when staffing decisions were being made. These are a few of their comments:

> In our yearly draft of principals, the candidates for the principalship of [name of school], you know, the list is a lot smaller. There may be, for example, 30 people that would like to go over there, and we consider [only] 3 or 4 very seriously, because of the people match -- in terms of the teachers also. I suppose the analogy might be, in the armed services in the U.S., it's the green berets. You know what I mean. It's a select troop.
>
> I think one of the greatest improvements, and maybe one of the smartest decisions made some time ago, was to get the right kind of staff working in inner city schools. I believe that at one time, the administrators and the teachers who went to inner city were those who probably weren't able to compete to go into the new and the beautiful schools in the nicer areas. In fact, there was a shift, and I think it must have been in the superintendent's mind, and other senior staff, to get in some of our most dynamic, and I'll say, youthful and progressive [people]. Everyone who was going to go into those schools to provide leadership would be of that type.
>
> I think you need to look at something like leadership appointments that have been made. I think that you've probably got, in downtown, a group of very energetic, mostly fairly young at this point in time, dedicated educators, who are put there for those particular reasons. I do not think you will see an administrator put into one of our downtown schools who is [an] average or below average administrator.

These comments suggest that the district administrators had taken steps to ensure that only talented, skilled, and enthusiastic educators were placed in urban poor schools. In particular, they felt that the principals appointed to those schools were of a very high quality. In response to the member check, one of the senior administrators pointed out that, while many talented staff members were placed in urban poor schools, the statement that *only* talented staff member were placed in those school was not entirely accurate.

One senior administrator had recently taken a new position pertaining to preferential staffing practices for urban poor schools had recently changed:

> In my first year or two [as a senior administrator] there were a couple of schools that we really pushed good staff into. Right now I think I'm more in the position of making sure that those schools that I work with downtown are not getting more than their share of poor teachers. I would not at this point in time say, "No, I'm not going to put a weak teacher there." But I would make sure that I gave them no more than their share.

The administrator felt that, at one time, urban poor schools had more weak staff members than did most schools, but that the imbalance had been corrected. The administrator was no longer prepared to ensure that no poor teachers be placed in urban poor schools, but was prepared to ensure that those schools did not get "more than their share."

The senior administrators felt that preferential treatment during staffing decisions provided a positive contribution to the education of poor children. After making such a point, one senior administrator raised a concern that was also expressed by several others:

> How do we stop burning teachers out with those kids? ... It's much more difficult to get a feeling of success in inner city schools than it is in suburban areas. ... Even teachers who've got tremendous empathy for these kids eventually run out of steam. And they need change. And some teachers just haven't got that [empathy]. Many of our teachers have never experienced anywhere close to it [poverty]. They were brought up in a middle class regime, they experienced middle class success, and they have a hell of a job understanding why these kids can't perform. And if they do understand, they think, "My God, what are we going to do about this? I don't know what to do about this." So they really have a sense of frustration, and a sense of discouragement .

The administrator was expressing two concerns. The first was that even the best teachers eventually "burn out" due to the stress associated with working with urban poor children. The second was that many teachers with middle class backgrounds had difficulty understanding poor children and, therefore, became frustrated and discouraged. Several senior administrators noted that this resulted in many staff members transferring to other schools after only relatively short periods of time working in schools serving poor children. In raising a rhetorical question, one senior administrator made the point that the best teachers were the most likely to transfer

> If you have two teachers, one is outstanding, the other is okay, and they both apply for a transfer, which one is more likely to get a transfer to the chosen land?

The policies and practices discussed above relate to the general kinds of district-level support that senior administrators believed was afforded schools serving poor students. The senior administrators also identified a number of specific programs which they felt had been implemented to address concerns related to the education of poor children. For example, most of them from one district spoke of a district-level initiative which had established pilot projects in seven district schools. One commented:

> There are about seven different projects. ... The purpose of the projects was to look at some novel, more effective ways, of getting resources into the school to meet the needs of those type of children. ... [The principal of] one of the schools ... has set up a drop-in centre for a multitude of agency people who can come into her school at any time. ... Some very neat things are starting to happen now. Quicker service is happening, much better dialoguing is going on, a good resource base is now building. People [are] becoming more aware of what is available. A book has been prepared, like a guide book, a ready reference for parents and for agency people and for our own school people on what is available out there to meet the needs of these children, "the urban poor".

The senior administrators noted that each of the seven "project schools" was extending efforts to better coordinate the services offered to poor children by the school district and other agencies.

All of the other programs that were identified were school-level initiatives. Four of the senior administrators noted that some schools had implemented programs aimed at teaching urban poor parents positive ways of interacting with their children and ways of supporting the education of their children. Of such programs, one senior administrator commented, "The good news is that it is happening. The bad news is, invariably, the parents you want to get there don't take advantage of that opportunity." Several senior administrators felt that the parents most in need of the programs chose not to attend.

Most of the senior administrators commented that some schools were offering "nutrition programs." Some spoke of "hot lunch" programs and others, of more limited nutrition programs which "offer snacks every day so that kids have something to eat."

Three types of programs were mentioned less often than those noted above. One such was that some schools were making special efforts at "outreach to the community." The schools engaged in such programs had hired staff members to work as liaisons with community members. One senior administrator described another program:

> Some of our schools in the inner city are paired up with schools in more suburban areas, where those children collect clothes and skates and things like that, and give them to their partner school in the inner city to help the kids with winter clothing.

Another spoke of a "police liaison program":

> When there's a particular [school event] going on, the off duty officers come over and mingle with the kids, whether it's a pancake breakfast or volleyball, or basketball, or track and field. Or [they] just come spend some off time -- come into the schools and spend their coffee time there. Those sorts of things.

The administrator noted that this program had been initiated by one of the schools in the district, and had since expanded to include several other schools.

With respect to the policies and practices that were in place at the time of the interviews, then, the senior administrators noted that, while there were no formal educational poverty policies, schools with large populations of poor students received additional district-level support in recognition of their special needs. Several of the senior administrators also identified school-level programs that had been undertaken to address the needs of urban poor children.

Needed or Desired Programs

During the interviews, the senior administrators were asked to imagine themselves in circumstances in which they had absolutely no constraints due to scarce financial resources. They were then asked to identify programs they would implement in order to improve the quality of education for urban poor children. This was done with the intent of obtaining their views as to the programs, or social strategies, that had the greatest potential for positively influencing the education of urban poor children.

In response to that question, two senior administrators asserted that nothing, other than what was already happening, was necessary. One stated, "I don't see anyone being denied the basics and the fundamentals of what schooling is all about. ... Society, I think, is doing its fair part in providing equality relative to opportunity in school." This, however, was a minority opinion. Most senior administrators identified at least one program they would implement if there were sufficient resources.

The programs that were identified are listed below. The number of senior administrators who identified each program is indicated in parentheses.

- Programs aimed at enhancing parents' roles in the education of their children. (3) The senior administrators who identified such programs believed them to be essential in schools serving urban poor children. One, for example, said, "Parent involvement would certainly be paramount. I think we have to reach them in order to reach the children." However, the senior administrators were uncertain as to how parental involvement could be achieved. One noted, "I don't know if that involves personal visits to their homes, and sit down with them and try and encourage them to attend something or other."

- Pre-school programs. (2) One senior administrator simply stated that, if resources were available, the district would become involved in "the caring and feeding of the kids from the time they're three years old." Another referred to experience as a supervisor in Early Childhood Education, and to a study done by Mary Wright (1983), to support an assertion that "there is much that an education system could do with pre-schoolers and with the parents of pre-schoolers that would be an investment in terms of the development of students."

- Placement of social workers in schools serving urban poor students. (2)

- Nutrition programs. (2) Two senior administrators stated that they would ensure that all urban poor children received adequate nutrition.

- Enhanced field trip programs. (1) The senior administrator who identified this program noted that its purpose would be to broaden the experiential bases of urban poor children.
- Substance abuse programs. (1) These programs would address alcohol and drug abuse problems of students and parents.
- Self esteem programs. (1) One senior administrator said there should be "more emphasis on caring and self esteem," because children's levels of self esteem determined whether they would be successful learners. In the administrator's words, "If you instill that in a child, then you can hammer in a thousand facts."

Summary

The senior administrators noted that some of the needs of urban poor children, such as those related to food, shelter, and clothing, did not fall within the mandate of the districts. Some felt that the districts should, therefore, not offer any services related to those needs. Others noted that they had little choice but to offer such services. Irrespective of their positions with regard to that issue, all of the senior administrators observed that there were negative consequences to offering services beyond those defined by their districts' mandate. Some felt that they were required to divert resources from "basic education" in order to offer those services, and thus were not doing as good a job as they should with basic education. Others noted that, because schools were providing services related to the basic needs of poor students, agencies that should be providing such services were not. All of the senior administrators felt that educational organizations were being overburdened with tasks that were not truly within their mandate.

Senior administrators noted that the districts had no educational poverty policies. They did, however, comment that some of their policies provided direction for the education of all children, including the urban poor. They also reported that, on an informal basis, urban poor schools received some preferential treatment. Most significant, they felt, was that they had been careful to ensure that many of their best staff members were placed in those schools.

The poverty-related programs that senior administrators observed to be in place in some schools within their districts included: programs to coordinate community and school services available to urban poor children, parenting programs, nutrition programs, community outreach programs, and police liaison programs. The programs they identified as not being in place, but as having potential to improve the quality of education for urban poor children included: programs to enhance the roles of parents in the education of their children, pre-school programs, placement of social workers in schools, nutrition programs in all schools serving urban poor students, and substance abuse programs.

Perspectives on Issues Related to Political Will

Earlier, it was noted that the senior administrators did not agree as to whether it was necessary to develop educational poverty policies, but that they did agree that it was unlikely that such policies would be developed in the near future. Here, the views of senior administrators as to circumstances that contributed to there being a relatively low level of political will to develop such policies are detailed. Six themes are addressed. Three of the themes -- stigma associated with poverty, societal perceptions and values, and the adequacy of knowledge pertaining to the poor -- seemed to be accorded minor importance, and three -- mandate, the relationship of other policy issues to poverty, and the nature of advocacy -- major importance.

The Stigma of Poverty

Four of the senior administrators commented that they and school board members were reluctant to develop educational poverty policies because to do so would require identifying and thus stigmatizing a segment of the population. One, for example, said:

> I think there's a reluctance on the part of administrators and the board to develop policy that singles out socio-economically deprived people, because then we're focusing a spotlight on them, and they'll be more visible as a result. I'm not sure that that will be productive. We may have good intentions to help them, as many social programs have [had] over the years -- they

> started out with good intentions, but they're not overly well received. Instead of highlighting a big program and making big announcements about it, maybe we should just quietly start working and developing programs, but not make a big deal about it.

This administrator believed that poverty policies would not be well received by the poor, and therefore, that approaches to assisting the poor that were not specified in policy would be more productive.

Societal Factors

One of the senior administrators noted that "politicians tend to be prepared only to deal with that which is palatable to the society in which they operate." Several argued that poverty was not one of those "palatable" issues. They believed this to be so because of a general conservative attitude in society. One presented the argument as follows:

> We're becoming a fairly right wing society -- me first, private enterprise, all this kind of stuff. ... I don't think that there's enough concern about some of the poor people in this country. There's still a solid belief by most people in powerful positions that anybody can get ahead in this world.

Although asserting that "fundamentally, I think that is wrong," this administrator believed that the traditional conservative position, which holds that, if they chose to do so, the poor could remove themselves from poverty, was well established in society.

Others argued that the "me first" attitude noted above was the most significant factor in shaping society's attitudes toward the poor. One, for example, made two related points:

> I think that we are, to a large extent, living in a "me" society. And I think to the extent that we do not adopt a position that says, "yes, I am my brothers' keeper," that some of those issues of poverty will not be eliminated, and the attitudes toward them [the poor] will not be eliminated.
>
> I think many people are far more preoccupied with their material possessions, and their material wealth, and their personal enjoyment right now, rather than ameliorating the problems of the poor.

The administrator felt that society had become somewhat egoistic and materialistic, and that until there was a change to other values, there was little chance that concern would be directed toward ameliorating the effects of poverty. Others were making a similar point when they noted that middle class communities would not accept having fewer educational resources than poorer communities. One felt that middle class communities would put extreme pressure on school board members to ensure that they received at least as many resources. As evidence, this administrator noted that a recent delegation to the school board from an upper middle class community had argued the case that "they deserved more than average since their contribution in taxes was more than average." Another senior administrator described this phenomenon as the tendency of people to "want to look after their own turf."

One senior administrator wondered "whether society really cares," then answered, "I think it's just a general apathy to helping people break out of that cycle [of poverty]." Another noted that, in society, "most of those [poverty-related] issues are below the surface, because people don't even know about them, and maybe they don't know about them because they don't want to know about them." While these two senior administrators were not making identical points, they were noting that there did not seem to be sufficient societal concern for the poor to result in people's wanting to be informed of, or to act in relation to, poverty issues.

Adequacy of Knowledge

Most senior administrators noted that good information was very important to the success of policymaking ventures. One, for example, when asked how important information was in the earliest stages of the policymaking process, replied, "To me it is crucial, it is vital. I get very frustrated when we don't have information." Another, while making a similar point also commented that they did not have adequate information to recommend policy changes pertaining to the education of urban poor children:

> I think the biggest thing for me is, do we have accurate information upon which to make recommendations for change? Is there something that's different that's needed in certain situations that we're not providing now, or is it just a different attitude that we need to promote? Or is it, in fact, a different service delivery? I don't know. I don't know the answers to those.

Other senior administrators made comments such as:

- "I would say we don't have adequate data."
- "It's difficult to get good data."
- "If I gave you any information, it would be a very general sort of information. I don't have any hard data or anything on it [poverty]."
- "I think the difficulty is if we don't have data, we may put money in the wrong spots."

Thus, the senior administrators, while noting the importance of good information to successful policymaking ventures, also noted that they did not have adequate information about poverty in the school districts.

Mandate

Senior administrators' concerns related to mandate were central to their thinking about whether the districts should assume responsibility for providing special programming for urban poor children. That sentiment transferred directly to their views as to whether their districts should undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Most of the senior administrators felt that the issues related to mandate would result in policymakers resisting such an undertaking. One, for example, said, "You're not going to find all trustees supporting it, all the administrators supporting it. There are the purists who want the education kept pure." This administrator was noting that there was a faction among the policymakers who wanted the district to stick to "basic education." Most senior administrators argued that this view resulted from limitations imposed by the financial resources available to the districts. One noted, "The financial resources we have at our disposal are not enough even to deal with the basic educational program. And I mean basic educational program in a sort of narrower sense, the schooling." Other senior administrators made the following comments:

- "Where do those dollars come from for that kind of service?"
- "We're not going to spend our educational dollars right now in that area."
- "Our district is in a deficit budget situation. ... We're just maintaining the status quo right now, and this is not the time where we can undertake any new initiatives in this area."
- "Where are the resources going to come from? ... We're living with finite resources. We do not have the dollars we used to."

Thus, the senior administrators' concerns related to mandate were closely tied with their concerns related to limited financial resources. Most felt that, until those concerns were resolved, educational poverty policies would not be developed.

The Relationship of Poverty to Other Policy Issues

Senior administrators noted that poverty was only one of the many issues that policymakers in their districts must consider. The relative priority of poverty among those issues, therefore, at least partially determined the extent of political will to undertake development of educational poverty policies.

All of the senior administrators felt that, relative to other issues, poverty was accorded a very low priority by policymakers. One observed that this was, in part, due to a "dedicated group of teachers" who were extending extra-ordinary efforts to address the needs of poor children, then commented, "I think it really keeps it out of the politicians' eyes as to how severe the problem is." Others simply noted that there were other more pressing issues which were demanding the attention of policymakers. One, for example, said:

> There's so much on the plate right now. We have a second language issue we've got to deal with. I mentioned the academic challenge issue we should deal with, and there are at least a half dozen "more pressing things" before we get onto the other one [poverty].

As the senior administrators made similar points, they identified the following as issues that were currently demanding attention: daycare; French, Ukrainian, Polish, and other language programming; special education programming; academic challenge programming; behavioral disorders programming; Native education; vocational education; school closures and consolidations; wheel chair accessibility for all schools; inter-school athletics; and standardized test results.

That these issues were taking precedence over poverty did not seem to reflect the senior administrators' views of the relative importance of the issues. For example, one commented: "As a senior administrator, I spend a lot of time dealing with policy in a lot of other areas that aren't nearly as important. ... Why do we do it? Maybe we ought to be rearranging our priorities." Another senior administrator also felt that poverty was an important issue, but that others demanded more immediate action. Special needs programming was offered as an example:

> It wouldn't be quite as easy to put that one [special needs programming] on the back burner for a year or two. When children have special needs that need to be attended to just to survive at school, you've got to do something about that, whereas some of these children who come from poor homes, they can manage. It's the level at which they manage that may not be as good, but they can certainly manage, so therefore they don't require immediate attention.

The nature of some of the other issues required that they receive immediate attention, whereas action on poverty-related issues could be delayed without any obvious consequences. Most senior administrators, however, identified another factor as accounting for issues taking precedence over poverty. These comments illustrate their points of view:

> If you look at what has happened in this district, the people who are active lobbyists are the ones who get the change and get their issues across. I can think of the parents of the academically challenged kids, the ABC group. I can think of the Alberta Association for Learning Disabilities, they have had things happen here. I think the next group we're going to hear from are the people who have groups such as Gateway who deal with

> the physically and dependent handicapped. They're looking at the total integration of their children into our schools. They've become very active, and unless we had someone, or a group that was a voice for the urban poor, things aren't going to change.
>
> There's a lot of issues that are far more pressing today because the political forces that bear upon school districts are better organized and more articulate, and are putting greater pressure on us.

They felt that it was not so much the nature of the issues that determined the immediacy with which they would be dealt, as it was the nature of the advocacy that the issues received.

Advocacy

Senior administrators believed that issues for which there was advocacy in the form of organized pressure groups were far more likely to be subjects of policymaking efforts than were issues that had no such advocacy. These comments reflect that position:

> The fact is we have other lobby groups, like academic challenge parents, that think that their kids are not getting a fair break with academic challenge programs. Those people usually are a little more forceful, a little more articulate, and they know how to get through to the people who make the decisions. And that's the political reality right there.
>
> You see these groups that contact the board are at least fairly well formally organized and know the political process, and know how to apply pressure and make their demands, or make their appeals, whatever. Now going back to the socio-economically deprived, assuming that some of them feel that there is a need there, they are not organized in the same sense, whereby they would come to the board and make suggestions or requests or demands for certain services to meet the needs of their population. They're not politically organized that way.

In addition to illustrating the importance which they ascribed to advocacy, these comments reflect senior administrators' observations that there were no well organized advocacy groups for the poor. Another senior administrator commented on the consequences:

> It [poverty] doesn't have a well orchestrated lobby. And increasingly I think our politics are that -- who makes the most

> noise gets the resources, rather than he or she who needs it the most will get the resources.

This administrator felt that, even though the need was recognized, because of the absence of advocacy groups, poverty-related issues would not be addressed. One of the most experienced senior administrators added another dimension to this argument:

> It is a matter of politics and where the power in the community is. And unless you get a poor community highly mobilized, very active politically, they do not exercise their clout. And so what happens is that when you look after the poor you do it with the support of the better or the richer. ... You've got to have a culture in which they accept that, and in the absence of that culture, the political power is such that, unless the poor are very aroused, they will not make any advance.

Prior to making this comment, the administrator had questioned whether the non-poor in society would be willing to assign some of their resources to assisting the poor. Here the administrator made the point that, without the non-poor being willing to undertake such largess, there was little chance for the development of educational poverty policies unless the poor, themselves, organized and became politically active.

In observing, as did all of the senior administrators, that the parents of poor children were not organized as an advocacy group, several of them suggested reasons why those parents were not organized. One, for example, said:

> People in poverty very often are so much overwhelmed with their own problems [they face] in such almost hopeless situations. [They are] also lacking in education, lacking in confidence in themselves to meet up with educated people and debate issues. [So much so] that they tend to stay away from schools, they tend to stay away from education.

Senior administrators believed that the absence of parental advocacy groups was largely responsible for there having been no efforts to develop educational poverty policies. One simply said: "Poor people don't protest, and don't cause ripples at the higher political levels. So, therefore, there isn't much incentive to write policy."

Several senior administrators speculated as to where advocacy might emerge. One commented:

> You're more likely going to get this [advocacy] from the establishment in terms of the people who work with the poor, the professionals, social workers, government bureaucracy. I think that's going to be the strongest lobby. I also think that another one that you may have, because of a political advantage, would be the elected people, and elected people either at the Provincial level or at the local level to some extent as well.

This administrator believed that advocacy groups could develop from among the professionals working with the poor. The same administrator also noted that some pressure had been exerted by school personnel:

> I can tell you that the pressure for the one of poverty -- the pressure has not come from organized groups. The pressure has come from those people who work with it, namely in our case, the people in the schools: principals [and] teachers, to the extent that they are heard.

Other senior administrators also felt that principals and teachers were potentially powerful advocates for the poor. One commented "trustees will listen to principals." Another, however, noted that traditionally school personnel have not been effective advocates; that they "too easily give in to a lack of attention," and that persistence would be necessary because school personnel "don't seem to be heard as readily as influential parents in other professions."

Thus, senior administrators felt that strong pressure groups were extremely important to efforts to initiate policymaking activities. They also noted that there were no such groups advocating poverty-related causes. This, they argued, resulted in there being very little incentive to develop educational poverty policies. Some also speculated that politicians or professionals working with the poor might form advocacy groups. There was little agreement as to the potential for school district personnel to exert effective advocacy.

Summary

The first of the six themes that were evident in the senior administrators comments about policymaking was that some of them perceived that trustees were reluctant to develop poverty policies for fear of stigmatizing the poor. The second was that they felt society had become fairly conservative and somewhat egoistic. The senior administrators argued that, in such an environment, there was very little support for efforts to ameliorate the problems of the poor. The third theme pertained to the adequacy of knowledge. Senior administrators did not believe that they had sufficient or accurate enough information upon which to engage in policymaking.

The first three were "minor themes" in the sense that the senior administrators seemed to accord them less importance than the other three. Mandate issues were presented as the first of the "major themes." Senior administrators believed that most policymakers considered many poverty-related issues to be outside their mandate, and that unless additional financial resources were provided, they would be unwilling to develop educational poverty policies. In presenting the second major theme, it was noted that many other issues were taking precedence over poverty in district-level policymaking. The final theme pertained to the nature of advocacy. Senior administrators believed that strong advocacy groups were crucial to the development of the political will necessary for policy development. The absence of such groups advocating poverty-related issues, they felt, significantly reduced the political will to develop educational poverty policies.

In response to this summary, one of the senior administrators who took part in the member check commented:

> The statement that most of us feel poverty issues are outside our mandate is naive, if nothing else. The general tone of this summary was almost one of avoiding issues. I don't think this is the case. I don't think we are as inhuman as this suggests.

The data, however, do clearly support the claims: senior administrators did perceive serious constraints related to mandate and limited financial resources.

The second concern, that related to "the general tone" of the summary, which the administrator felt, reflected badly on senior administrators, is potentially more serious. If the summary does, indeed, convey that impression, it must be clarified that there is no intention that it do so. There were no "villains" found in this research. The principals, senior administrators, and trustees that were interviewed were all intelligent and caring people who took their responsibilities very seriously. All expressed concern about the education of urban poor children.

Chapter Summary

With respect to the general climate for the development of educational poverty policies, most senior administrators believed that the districts were not currently considering any poverty-related policy initiatives. They did not agree as to whether the development of such policies was necessary, but did agree that it was unlikely that they would be developed in the near future. Most senior administrators believed that the responsibility for initiating new policies or programs related to the education of poor children should be left at the school district level, with Alberta Education assuming a supporting role.

Senior administrators felt that poverty was becoming more prevalent, and that it existed in all areas of the city. They also noted that some regions, including the inner city, had greater concentrations of poverty than others. They felt that, in many urban poor families, the needs of the children for food, clothing, and shelter were not adequately met. Some raised concerns about transiency, family violence, and generally unstable family structures. Concerns that many urban poor parents did not provide home environments supportive of student learning, and that the academic achievement of poor students was very low, were more general.

Senior administrators expressed disparate views about the nature of the issues confronting the poor. Some felt that the problems the poor faced were very serious and difficult to overcome, while other felt that the problems were not as serious and could be overcome if the poor were only willing to extend the necessary effort.

Senior administrators noted that some needs, such as those related to food, shelter, and clothing, did not fall within the mandates of the districts. Some felt that they should, therefore, not offer any services related to those needs. Others noted that they had little choice but to offer such services. All of them felt that educational organizations were being overburdened with tasks that were not truly within their mandate.

Although the districts did not have specific educational poverty policies, some of the general policies provided direction for the education of all children, including the poor. Senior administrators reported that, on an informal basis, schools that serve large populations of poor students received some preferential treatment.

The poverty-related programs observed to be in place in some schools within the districts included: programs to coordinate community and school services available to urban poor children, parenting programs, nutrition programs, community outreach programs, and police liaison programs. The programs senior administrators identified as not being in place, but as having potential to improve the quality of education for urban poor children, included: programs to enhance the roles of parents in the education of their children, pre-school programs, placement of social workers in schools, nutrition programs in all schools serving urban poor students, and substance abuse programs.

Senior administrators believed there to be very little political will to develop educational poverty policies. They felt that trustees were reluctant to develop poverty policies for fear of stigmatizing the poor. They argued that, with conservative principles dominating society, there was very little support for efforts to ameliorate the problems of the poor. They also noted that they did not have sufficient or accurate enough information to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Issues related to mandate were identified as having a major effect on political will. Senior administrators believed that most policymakers considered many poverty-related issues to be outside their mandate, and therefore, that unless additional financial resources were provided, they would be unwilling to develop educational poverty policies. A second factor which was also believed to have a major effect on political will was that there were many other "more pressing" issues with which policymakers were currently dealing. The most strongly made point, however, was that advocacy groups were crucial to the development of political will, and that there were no groups advocating poverty-related causes.

CHAPTER VI

URBAN POVERTY AND EDUCATION: TRUSTEES' PERSPECTIVES

There were a variety of themes evident in the interview data obtained from the 11 trustees who participated in the study. For presentation, these themes are organized into four section which address: (1) the general climate for policymaking related to the education of urban poor children, (2) information that trustees brought to bear on their thinking about the education of urban poor children, (3) extant and needed policies and practices, and (4) perspectives on issues related to political will.

In response to the member check, one of the trustees wrote in reference to this chapter, "You appear judgmental in some places. Is that intended?" The answer is unequivocally, "No. That was not intended." Every effort was made to write the chapter so as to reflect the views of trustees as they were expressed during the interviews, and to do so without passing judgment on those views. However, that this trustee did not perceive the researcher to have been entirely successful in this endeavor, raises a caution to which all readers should be alerted.

The General Climate for Policymaking Pertaining to the Education of Urban Poor Children

Most trustees made reference to the general climate for the development of educational poverty policies. They spoke of current poverty-related initiatives, the extent to which educational poverty policies were needed, the likelihood that such policies would be developed, and the locus of responsibility for initiating any needed changes.

Current Poverty-Related Initiatives

During the interviews, trustees were asked whether the districts were considering any initiatives that related to the education of poor children. Trustees from one of the districts were not aware of any such initiatives. One, for example, noted:

> I've not seen any movement like that happening. Certainly, [in] that broad of a perspective -- looking at the urban poor and assessing their needs and wants, and seeing whether they should be put in a special category -- [poverty issues] have never come to the board.

Several of the trustees from the second district responded similarly. Others, however, referred to a project to "coordinate social services," and to a proposal to pilot test a "Head Start program." One trustee described the nature of the project to coordinate social services:

> It is a pilot project. The eight schools are looking at how they can best deal with the needs of kids as [those needs] relate to agency services. ... I think one of the interesting things is that everyone's addressing it differently. I think that's what we like to encourage, I suppose. I think it points out even more dramatically that there are so many situations out there, and obviously each school tries to focus in on what their priority would be. The [name of school] one is an interesting one, because they're working on more of an attempt to try to bring kids in and set up a council, and try to bring parents in to say, "What kinds of programs would you like?"

The eight schools involved in the pilot project were pursuing different avenues in efforts to coordinate the services of various agencies. This trustee seemed to be particularly impressed with progress in one school which had involved students and parents in their efforts.

The trustee who had initiated the motion to "examine the feasibility of pilot testing a Head Start program in an inner city school" was the only one to offer specific information about that project. Even this trustee, however, was uncertain about what progress had been made since the board passed the motion.

The Need for Educational Poverty Policies

Two trustees felt that there was an immediate need to develop educational poverty policies. One stated that "I think an educational poverty policy is almost to a point of necessity," and that "it would be advisable to set up a policy now."

The other trustees, however, were less certain that poverty policies were needed. One seemed to think that such policies would be beneficial, but wondered whether they were already in place:

> I think some policy could be developed, and would need to be developed, perhaps, if we don't already have [them]. Perhaps we have policy on our books, and it's not being interpreted in the way that it needs to be interpreted for those particular kinds of situations.

Most of the trustees expressed ambivalence, each having different reasons for that ambivalence. In arguing that developing a poverty policy would not necessarily improve education for poor children, one trustee stated:

> I'm not sure how to deal with this. I'm a little ambivalent, I suppose, in my own mind about where we could get some success, because you can mess around trying to develop policy, and I'm not really sure that it would address the issues.

Later in the interview, the same trustee spoke in favor of implementing pilot projects rather than developing poverty policies. Another commented: "I'm not so sure, because I think a lot of things that are good for them are things that are good for all children." This trustee was arguing that, because educational practices that would benefit poor children would also benefit other children, specific poverty policies might not be necessary. Another, when asked whether educational poverty policies were necessary, responded:

> I've really debated that one myself, because when I look at what Alberta spends on social services ... there's a lot of money spent. ... I'm not sure, if we had a whole bunch more money, whether we would solve the issue. ... And there's been a lot of things done. Some of the social planning types of things like public housing [being] dispersed away from the center of the city, I think, help. And so things like that already are done.

> Whether or not a whole series of Head Start programs would help, I don't know.

This trustee felt that much was already being done, and that any new policy that directed more financial resources toward the solution of the problems of poor children might not contribute a great deal more.

Likelihood of Policy Development

Only one of the trustees felt that educational poverty policies were likely to be developed in the foreseeable future. The others felt that such a move was quite unlikely. In making this point several of the trustees noted that the issues simply have not come up at the board level. The trustee who believed that policy would be developed commented that the Minister of Education had "given some indication" that he was prepared to extend support for the education of urban poor children beyond the grants currently offered for "disadvantaged schools." The trustee did not know what the nature of the new support might be.

Locus of Responsibility

The trustees all expressed views as to where the responsibility for initiating changes in the education of poor children resided. In asserting, "as a school district, we can't solve all of society's ills," one trustee was making a point on which they all agreed. They were unanimous in the opinion that responsibility for acting on issues related to urban poverty did not belong only to the school boards. Several, for example, argued that the provincial and federal governments held the major share of responsibility, and that they could do little unless those levels of government provided additional financial resources. One trustee offered that for any initiative to be successful, "we have to have the most senior people in government willing to tackle that problem."

While not prepared to accept responsibility for initiating changes to address all of the needs of poor children, most of the trustees believed that part of the responsibility was rightfully theirs. One, for example, said:

> From the point of view of the learning experiences and opportunities, there is no question we have that [responsibility], at least within the age range that the School Act says we do. The Province has it the rest of the way, I believe.

Two trustees held that, even within the range of their districts' responsibilities for educating urban poor children, it was not the responsibility of trustees to take the initiative in recommending new poverty policies or programs. One of them argued that trustees did not have the resources to do the background work necessary to ensure the success of any proposed initiative and, therefore, that the responsibility for initiating changes resided with district senior administrators:

> If you bring a notice of motion, and you're ill prepared, then you might lose the issue. And what a shame, to lose an issue of real importance because a trustee wasn't well prepared. ... That's why -- I'm talking about the initiative -- if it comes from the administration, the trustees have time to look it over. What's more the administration has more resources to look at a problem in-depth, especially one like this.

Another trustee disagreed, claiming that administrators "really have to take their cue from the board," and that when the board strongly supports a new initiative, "almost anything can happen."

Thus, the trustees felt that much of the responsibility for initiating changes pertaining to the education of poor children resided with other government agencies. Two trustees argued that senior administrators were responsible for initiating any necessary changes at the district level, while another felt that trustees were responsible for initiating such changes.

Summary

Although several of the trustees spoke of recent initiatives to address the needs of poor children, most were not aware of such initiatives. Most were also ambivalent as to whether there was a need to develop educational poverty policies. Some were not sure that policies would help, others felt that much was already being done, and one argued that specific poverty policies might not be necessary because the programs needed for poor students were needed for all students. All but one of the trustees believed that it was unlikely that educational poverty policies would be developed in the foreseeable future. Most of the trustees believed that the responsibility for initiating any changes that were needed resided with other government agencies.

Information that Trustees Brought to Bear on Their Thinking About Poverty-Related Issues

Trustees called on their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances in order to develop their arguments or to defend particular points of view. They presented data and information pertaining to the demographics of poverty in their school districts, the nature of the home and community circumstances of urban poor children, the nature of urban poor students, and the nature of the issues confronting the poor.

Demographic Information

At the beginning of the interviews, all of the trustees were asked for impressions about the demographics of poverty in the school districts. In response, one trustee commented: "I couldn't say which are the poverty areas of the city. I think we all know ... that there is a core area where it's generally thought that there are more difficulties, that there is more poverty." Other trustees had more definite opinions about the extent and distribution of poverty. The following comments demonstrate the range of these opinions:

- I would say that the greatest concentration is in the inner city core. ... But that has been changing. I think that area has been moving out from the inner city core. On the periphery you find, I think, [for example] that there are some areas in the sort of south-center, just on the fringes of where the industrial starts. There are areas in there, I think, that you can, to some degree, [identify] by the nature or the type of housing that's provided. The north-east -- there's the north-east area where there is low-cost housing that's been sort of centered. You will find them [the poor] in those areas, a great deal more now than previously.

- I guess the most obvious place where one expects it is in the inner city core, although, I think in the last three or four or five years, that has changed rather remarkably. Areas that one would have thought were relatively affluent in the normal course of events, now do show some signs of poverty, although it may be well hidden. ... I think the central area of a city such as ours, when it starts to sprawl, becomes a center for poverty, although I think there are many low-income rental areas in various other parts of the city.
- Certainly there are pockets everywhere. I'm sure there could be some [areas] excluded from that [such as] the south-west communities. I think there tend to be pockets throughout.

All of the trustees noted that there was poverty in the "inner city." Most, however, also observed other areas had concentrations of poverty. The north-east area of the city was most frequently mentioned in this regard. Areas in the south and in the west of the city were also mentioned by a few trustees. Some noted that, while there were areas with concentrations of poverty, poverty existed throughout the city. This, they felt, was due to the presence of low-income housing in most communities. Several trustees expressed a belief that the amount of poverty in the city was increasing.

Home and Community Circumstances

Only two of the trustees commented on the nature of poverty-related community circumstances. Both of them spoke of the concentration of poverty in communities served by schools they had visited. One, for example, noted:

> Close to 50% of the families are single parent, and the bulk of those are low-income earners, or on social allowance. So it's pretty -- overall, it's pretty depressing. It's difficult for the children. Clearly their expectations are not always being met. And I think it's frustrating and stressful within the home life, which of course translates into the school.

In shifting the focus from community circumstances to home circumstances, this trustee was returning to the theme that received the most attention from the trustees as they discussed poverty-related circumstances. All of them expressed concerns about the nature of the home environments of poor children. For example, one trustee commented:

> Isn't it interesting the things that come to mind so quickly. You think of kids coming to school without having eaten, maybe improperly clothed. Also I somehow relate the kids that we've heard about from principals that come to school having had five uncles living with them in the last three months. ... Some of the other things that you think about: they're not the ones that generally would have the bicycles, and they would not have the same kinds of Christmas as the rest of the people would have, but I think mostly though it is the raggedy kind of living, and maybe not having enough to eat is what comes to mind.

Several trustees expressed similar concerns about the basic needs of many poor children not being met at home, and about the instability, or "raggedy kind of living," in some of the homes. One raised a more specific concern which was also shared by most of the trustees:

> The parents don't have the commitment or involvement in the school. They probably don't even understand the educational process. ... The bottom line is that in your poverty areas your family involvement with the educational process is not as strong. There are also cases of neglected children. ... You'll have your cases of children not being fed and coming to school, and, of course, having a difficult time carrying on with the day because of a lack of nutrition, or being improperly clothed, or a bad emotional situation at the home, which then transfers over into their studies.

Trustees were concerned that parents of urban poor children were not involved in, and did not support, their children's schooling. One argued that the level of home support was a much more serious concern than matters related to basic needs:

> It's not usually hunger or poor clothing, although I know those are there, but I really worry about the background of the children. The fact that they come from homes that have not encouraged good speech, certainly not reading, maybe not watching television with any kind of discrimination -- just the kind of language and manners that may be used in a home that make it very difficult for those kids to move into another [more advantaged] area, because they don't have the same kind of values and the same kind of speech patterns and the same kind

> of language as those that maybe come from a different or better home.

This trustee believed that the home environments of many poor children not only result in children having school problems in areas such as speech and reading, but also that those environments create an "ethos" or a "culture" from which children have a difficult time escaping.

As noted previously, however, the concern raised most frequently related to lack of parental support for education. These three comments reflect the perceptions of trustees as to the magnitude of this concern:

> I guess what comes to mind for me is just lack of support for the kids. We can try and do as good a job as humanly possible in the district, but we only have those kids -- well maybe half their waking hours or less -- maybe a third. And if there is not support for them, [support for] the learning and the whole process outside of school, it's very tough for kids to realize just how important it is for them to learn.
>
> If their environment doesn't encourage education, they may drop out of school, not feel encouraged, or find it tough because they don't have time to study, or they don't have a good place to study, and on and on.
>
> They're not disadvantaged intellectually. [For them] to be able to cope with the environment they're in, if you can bring that about, then you're on your way to getting them out of the disadvantaged kind of situation that they're in. *But some will never come out of that because the domicile is predominant in a lot of pressures that are negative.*

Most of the trustees felt that the consequences of the home environments of urban poor children presented formidable challenges for schooling. Indeed, many wondered whether schools could successfully address those challenges.

Student Characteristics

Although, for purposes of analysis, "student characteristics" and "home circumstances" are considered in separate sections of this chapter, trustees did not view them as being independent. In fact, most agreed with the trustee who described poverty-related student characteristics as "manifestations of poor environments." One trustee argued that poor attendance was one such manifestation:

> Some of the children do not attend regularly because the home environment is not sufficiently orderly to [convey] "this is a school day, and this is a routine you must have in order to improve your intellect and educational skill to prepare you for life."

Two trustees felt that, due to home environments, urban poor children presented severe behavior problems in school. Two other trustees argued a contrary position. They felt that behavior problems were present in all schools, and were no more severe in urban poor schools. One, for example, when discussing the increasing number of children being identified as having a "behavior disorder," argued," when I see the background of some of those kids, it's not out of poverty that their problems are coming."

With the few exceptions noted above, trustees confined their comments about student characteristics to responses to the question of how well urban poor students achieved in school relative to middle class children. These are typical of the responses that trustees made to that question:

- I don't [know], but that would be an interesting study, and I'd like to see the results.

- I guess most of [my views] on this would not be [based on] hard data to begin with, it would be a perception. And it would be the kind of reading I've done that shows that families that tend to come out of poverty or welfare tend to still be there in the next generation.

- I don't know if any real research has been done on that in our school district or not. ... My impression is that probably that they do somewhat less well in school.

- I haven't seen any hard data, but I've talked to people and I know that the impression is that only the very bright work their way out.

- I can't off-hand say that I know. ... But I have the impression that it is a difficulty for the children in some of these areas to be doing well in school. ... I couldn't tell you whether as a general fact that they don't do as well. I suspect it is so, though.

The trustees observed that they were not aware of any studies or even any statistics that they could bring to bear on answering the question. They did, however, have opinions which they expressed. Most felt that the academic achievement of poor children was quite low. One stated so categorically: "the reality for children who find themselves in these circumstances is that they do not succeed in school." However, as the comments above suggest, most others were somewhat less certain.

One trustee expressed a very different opinion:

> As a trustee, I'm not aware of glaring disparities in test scores that would indicate that we would have to address things simply on the basis of economics.
>
> Academically speaking I have the feeling, overall, that we're probably doing okay.
>
> I don't know, I think that if you took away the culture and did it strictly on an academic expectations, I'm not sure we're doing a bad job.
>
> I don't think if you look at people who've graduated over the years from those [poverty] areas that there's a significant deficit there in terms of expectations, and having them go to university.

This trustee felt that urban poor children were achieving satisfactory results.

Another trustee, after stating that, generally, urban poor children do not do well in school, noted that this was not true of immigrant children:

> Recent immigrant groups who are poor locate in the inner city, because of adequate housing being more reasonable there, or because there are other people of the same [ethnic] group. And their children [are] in the schools, and some of them are very bright, and are very high achievers.

Two other trustees expressed similar opinions with respect to the achievement of immigrant children.

Nature of the Issues Confronting the Poor

Although most trustees said very little about specific poverty-related circumstances, they all had much to say about the general nature of poverty-related issues. Of course, the preceding discussion of trustees' perceptions of the characteristics of urban poor students and of the nature of those students' home and community circumstances partially defines their understanding of issues confronting the poor. So as to provide a more complete picture of their understanding of those issues, the discussion below explicates four themes: (1) the relationship between poverty and school achievement, (2) the effects of the concentration of poverty, (3) the severity of poverty-related issues, and (4) the urban poor and their relationship to society.

The Relationship Between Poverty and School Achievement

Several trustees felt that poverty, itself, did not necessarily result in children doing badly in school. One trustee, for example, commented:

> You can be poor and well-adjusted and come from a reasonably good background, but parents who just by virtue of the fact that [they] don't have money, but do have an interest in education, strive to make sure that you have enough food so that you can go to school and still exist. Whereas there's others who don't know enough to do that. But the kids sort of forage for themselves, and go to school if they feel like it. And then all kinds of other problems can develop.

This trustee was arguing that many poor children do quite well in school because their families take an interest in education, and that the poor children who did not do well were from families where there was little guidance for the children. Another trustee also argued that poverty did not necessarily lead to lack of success:

> You look at people who come from economically deprived areas, and I look back now and see how many of them are very, very successful. Part of the reason being that they did come [from a background of poverty]. I'm not suggesting that in order to be successful you have to be the starving artist, but very often it is enough impetus to get people moving, and really setting goals for themselves that they really strive to achieve. And that is important, but again it comes back to, not only "What is poverty? but "What kind of poverty? I think it's important to distinguish between them.

This trustee had knowledge of people who were born to poor families, but had been very successful. The trustee felt that, for those families, poverty had been a positive motivator.

In making similar points, several of the trustees referred to the academic successes of many poor oriental students. One of them said:

> Some people see everything as a problem, and they want to sit down and not take it on. Other people see it as a challenge, and want to see how they can get the best out of the fences that have been put in front of them. ... Sometimes poverty is there because those families don't have good coping skills. And the ones who may hit equally bad times in their lives, because they've been trained in good coping skills, and they've been given strong backgrounds, and strong [self] esteem and support, they seem to be able to take those hurdles. And you know maybe with many of our Chinese, those people see things as getting better, so they don't see them as blocks, they just see them as something they've got to jump, but there's a lot of support and help to get over them.

This trustee felt that poor families who chose to approach their circumstances as challenges rather than as insurmountable obstacles were likely to be successful. The trustee also noted that many economically poor Chinese families adopted such an attitude.

In expressing a somewhat contradictory point of view, three trustees wondered whether low academic results of some schools in poverty areas might have more to do with the presence of large numbers of immigrants, than with poverty. One, for example, commented:

> Maybe some of the schools aren't doing as well academically. The trouble is that sometimes you correlate poverty to educational accomplishments when, in fact, it has as much to do with ethnic background. Maybe there is such a [large] group of them that don't know English well. And I think of some schools that have a predominance of new Canadians. Their first thing is to learn how to be Canadians, and maybe they don't do so well in some of the academic subjects.

Several trustees argued that, because poverty, itself, does not necessarily determine failure for students, it was more productive for them to consider other issues that may affect all students, including the poor. One, for example, noted:

> We do not look at it quite that way [in terms of poverty]. Children who are disadvantaged are disadvantaged educationally. [They are disadvantaged in terms of] their traits and so on, or the emotional problems. They're autistic, [for

> example]. It is categorized differently, you see, and then it's dealt with on that level.

He felt that poverty was too broad an issue and that it ought to be broken down into its component problems, which could then be treated.

The Effects of the Concentration of Poverty

Several trustees felt that the concentration of poverty in an area was an important factor to consider. They made the following statements:

> At one time I thought maybe poverty was inner city, but I'm now convinced that's it's not, it's throughout. It's just more visible in the inner city. But when I think back on my own son going to [name of school], for example, there are low rental properties owned by the city that people move into, and there's coming and going and there's poverty there. The housing is a lot better, and the educational opportunity in many respects is better than in the inner city, but it's still poverty. Why I say education is better, it's not curriculum [or] teachers, as much as the kids are accepted as part of the community. And the community itself supports family units in that way to some extent anyway. So in some of the outlying areas you tend to find maybe a little more support for people who are experiencing poverty, and it's better then for the kids.

> It's better to have poverty distributed around, because there is the opportunity for some learning to take place outside of school just from interacting with kids that aren't in that syndrome.

> If we take a school in the west end for instance, there may be poverty in particular families, but the concentration wouldn't show up at the school, because those schools draw on a wide range of family structures. I suppose I think of maybe [name of school], where definitely there's some very, very poverty areas, where those children would come from. But then the communities to the south that send their children to [name of school], that's really very much in a different situation. ... I don't know what is the best situation for children in that regard. If it's better that only 10% of a school is very poor children and if they can have better success because they strive to do better, or if they become very defeatist because they know that they don't have all those kinds of things that other kids have. I just don't know the answer to that.

These trustees were noting that the experiences of poor children in the inner city, where there was a relatively high concentration of poverty, were different from the experiences of poor children who lived in areas with smaller concentrations of poverty. Two trustees felt that children living in areas with less poverty would have a better experience than those in the inner city. The other trustee was not certain that this was so.

The Severity of Poverty-Related Issues

Trustees were almost equally divided in their opinions with respect to the severity of poverty-related issues. Some believed that the problems were quite serious, some that they were not very serious, and a few stated both positions at different times during the interviews.

The following comments illustrate a point made by most of the trustees who felt that poverty-related issues were quite serious:

> Where the parents are in the low income bracket level because of the nature of the job, the employment, single parent families, a lot of welfare families, that just transcends itself to the children, in their upbringing, in their home environment. That then translates itself to a cultural disadvantage. Somehow they do not appear to be able to escape that cultural disadvantage, if they are financially poor [as children].
>
> It's something we have to live with. You try and minimize it, you try and break the poverty cycle. But to hope to completely eliminate it, is an impossible dream.
>
> Poverty is a real problem clearly that's with our society. But, you know, has it ever been any different? I'm not so biblical, but I think there's something [in the scriptures] about "and they will always be with us."

These trustees felt that poverty was a serious, perhaps intractable societal issue. One trustee, in making a similar point, argued that, irrespective of the intractability of poverty, the district must extend efforts to address the issues:

> I think you really have to develop a plan for getting people to break out of that cycle. I think it's probably an extremely difficult one to break out of, but if you don't try, and if you don't make some attempts at it, the group is going to grow.

The trustee was concerned that, unless action was taken, the number of poor in the city would continue to increase. Two other trustees also made reference to the increasing number of poor. One commented:

> To consider that a child does not have anything to eat, you know, it's not that they're making a choice. It's that they don't have a choice. And that kind of thing, from the evidence that we seem to get during these budget discussions, that is really on the increase.

Conversations with principals during "budget discussions" had convinced this trustee that poverty was on the increase. A second trustee stated: "I think the situation in Edmonton or in Alberta is such that you can't shut your eyes and pretend that it doesn't exist." This trustee felt that the number of poor had increased to the point where it was no longer possible to ignore them or their concerns.

The trustees quoted above were convinced that poverty was a serious societal issue that affected large numbers of people in Edmonton. Others felt that poverty was a less serious concern. Several commented about the qualitative nature of the circumstances of those who are relatively poor. These are four such comments:

- My perception would be that real hard hard core poverty, where people would be absolutely hungry or cold, or not have proper clothing, would be rather limited in this city.

- You'd rarely have any schools that I'm aware of in Edmonton have a drive to give clothing to the students of the parents of that school.

- These kids are not gangland, or gang members. We don't have untoward vandalism. We run programs. We have good communication with the parents as best we can. I think the indicators are positive.

- Alberta's still a young province, actually we don't have generation upon generation [of poor] in this province as they do in other parts of the country.

These trustees observed that severe poverty-related problems were not in evidence in the school districts. Several trustees made a similar point by referring to the relative severity of poverty in other cities. One said: "Based on the information that we seem to have available, we do not have the problems that I have seen in other major metropolitan areas." Another, after noting that, in Canada, agencies other than schools take care of poverty-related issues, stated: "in the United States, [where] my assumption is that they have not near the programs, it [poverty] really knocks hard on the door of the school, more than it might do in Edmonton."

Two trustees compared the severity of poverty-related issues to the severity of other issues. In stating the belief that children from higher socio-economic homes experience as many difficulties as those from poor homes, one noted:

> I suppose when you're talking about poverty, you're talking about dollars and cents. You know, there is, in some areas, [what] somebody might call social poverty. That might be in some of the higher socio-economic areas, where there are the latch key kids, where both parents might be professionals and they don't see their children that much. And that's talking very philosophically I know, but I suspect that some of those kids in the higher socio-economic areas might be raising themselves as much as some in the lower.

This trustee contended that in the future, the problems of well to do children will transcend the problems of the poor:

> I think [in] the next generation, you'll see a lot of children who come out of very well-to-do families who maybe don't achieve anything in life because of the lack of society giving them a feel and a commitment to producing in this world.

Another spoke of urban poverty relative to other issues:

> We talk about urban poor. What about rural? What about smaller districts? What about just the size of jurisdictions where children are lacking socially because they never get to see anybody else? They're either on the bus, or they're in school for a short period of time. There's neither time nor resources to talk about things like we do in the city. Field trips -- I mean for us to take kids to the legislature is no big deal. For somebody in Sangudo, for God's sake, it's a day's trip.

This trustee felt that the educational problems of poor children are not of the scale of the educational problems of rural students or of students from small urban centers.

The Urban Poor and Their Relationship to Society

Most trustees expressed points of view about the general nature of the poor. Several ascribed negative qualities to the poor. One, for example, felt that many of the poor were prepared to accept responsibility only for themselves, and would not take on the responsibilities associated with a non-poor lifestyle:

> I guess some people just believe this is the way life is. Some would believe that if you're very rich, how easy it is -- you have no responsibility. And I believe some who are very rich have an awful responsibility. And so there are both ends of the scale, and I think maybe with poverty, maybe they believe their only responsibility is to themselves.

Another spoke of the manner in which the poor deal with responsibility:

> It might be that groups of people who are in poverty might get a break and get a job. And maybe after five paycheques, believe they're well to do, and maybe not stay with the job.

This trustee was also concerned that many of the poor were not able to accept the responsibilities inherent in a non-poor lifestyle.

Another argued that the poor who were experiencing difficulties were experiencing them because they were wasteful:

> I'm not really convinced that one can set a certain limit and say, "if you don't have this much money you can't survive," because some people can take that much money, and it's amazing what they do with it through initiative. And others could have double that, and they achieve nothing because they don't spend it in the right areas.

This trustee believed that, with a little initiative, low income families would not have the difficulties they seem to have.

The view of the poor being somewhat inferior was expressed most directly by the trustee who said:

> Human nature -- the fact that each individual has in him a different degree of motivation. It might sound elitist, or selective, but if you think of that in terms of Darwinian theory and evolution, and how we as a species have evolved over millions of years, maybe this is a process of natural selection. I

> mean, certain people are born with a will to do only so much, and maybe when we look at those urban poor who, for generations, are on this cycle, maybe that's what is happening there. That's somewhat contradictory because under evolution the weak would wither away, but here these less effective are multiplying.

Another trustee expressed a similar point of view:

> I guess I tend to believe the school of thought that says, "We're a product of our environment. And some people are strong enough to overcome deficiencies in their background and others are not."

This is the thesis that the poor are inferior to the non-poor, and that is why they are poor. One trustee, who held quite a different belief about the poor, lamented that many people in society believe the thesis that the poor are inferior:

> I regret to say that there's still an attitude among people that if people are poor, they're somehow inferior. And even if they're not [inferior], they [the poor] automatically believe that it is so. The people themselves will buy into that belief.

One trustee seemed to think that the poor choose their lifestyle because they perceive it to be preferable to other lifestyles:

> Sometimes we put our middle-class values [up and] uphold them as being the only manner in which people can live. And why don't they want a big God damn mortgage? Why don't they want a car? And why don't they want to slit their throat to go to work everyday of the bloody week? [They say] "Give me enough to live."

Another did not believe that many of the poor were content to live in poverty:

> Most people don't want to be in poverty. Never mind what the right wingers say, they don't want to be poor. And they would do what they could to get out of it, including working.

The trustees held somewhat divergent views about the nature of the poor and their relationship to society. Many seemed to believe that the poor were poor because they were, in some way, inferior to the non-poor, or that the poor had chosen their lifestyles and were content with them, or that they could escape those lifestyles if they chose. A smaller number saw the poor as not inferior, but simply as a group "trapped" in poverty.

In responding to the member check, one trustee expressed concern about the contents of this section:

> [This section] seems to focus on the "deserving poor" as opposed to the "undeserving poor." My discussions have never shown it that black and white. There seems to be recognition that some poor are there because of a special circumstance in their life and they will overcome that chapter of life and succeed.
>
> Some are poor but work hard, have good coping skills, positive outlooks and may never be materially well off but will be relatively content. At least as content as some $50,000 a year families that I know.
>
> Then there are some whom "life has defeated." They cannot cope, they cannot be motivated. Life is an hour to hour or day to day survival.
>
> I thought trustees' comments indicated that "mix" rather than a strong divergent view.

No changes were made to this section to accommodate these remarks. A review of the interview data suggested that, indeed, a few of the trustees did express the "mix" noted above. Most, however, did not. Most of the trustees who expressed a pejorative view of the poor did so throughout their interviews, and most who projected a more positive view of the poor also did so throughout their interviews.

Summary

Trustees observed that, of the areas in the city, the inner city had the greatest concentration of poverty. They noted, however, that poverty was spread throughout the city, and that there were other areas that had serious concentrations.

They made few, and usually only brief, comments about home and community circumstances of poor children. Some felt that, in many urban poor families, the basic needs of the children were not being met. The concern raised most frequently, however, was that parents in such families did not become involved in their children's schooling, and that they did not provide sufficiently supportive home environments for their children to be successful in school.

Most trustees felt that the academic performance of poor children was low relative to the performance of non-poor children. One, however, argued that poor children were performing satisfactorily. Several others noted that many poor immigrant children achieved excellent academic results. A few trustees argued that, because poverty did not necessarily lead to poor performance in school, it would be more productive to focus on other issues such as language deficits or behavior problems.

There was no clear consensus as to the relative severity of poverty-related issues. Some trustees felt that the problems faced by the poor were very difficult to overcome, while others felt that the problems were less serious, and could be overcome if only the poor would extend the necessary effort.

Addressing the Needs of Urban Poor Students

Themes related to the manner in which the districts addressed the needs of urban poor children are presented below. This entails discussions of the views of trustees as to the extent of the districts' responsibilities pertaining to the education of poor children, policies and practices that were in place, and policies and practices that were necessary or desirable.

District Responsibilities Pertaining to the Education of Urban Poor Children

When discussing responsibilities pertaining to the education of urban poor children, all of the trustees referred to the official mandate of the school districts, which most defined as providing "basic education." Most trustees felt that, because many poverty-related issues were not within that mandate, districts should not assume responsibility for addressing the issues. One trustee, for example, stated:

> I think the problem is, "How much are we talking about a basic education?" and "How much are we talking about an enhanced education." ... Again, being an extension of the family, there's only so much we can do within our resources. I think, within the terms of a standard education, with some exceptions, we are doing the job we are supposed to be. ... I'm not sure that we

> can simply pump in money, as a school district, simply because children come to us from low economic circumstances.

Others clarified their reasons as to why they felt the districts should confine operations to those defined by mandate. In making a point raised by three trustees, one commented: "The average kid in our school system is being shafted today, because our school system has picked up so many of the things that should be looked after by other agencies." This trustee felt that the school district had already taken on too many programs that were not within the mandate, and as a consequence, was not executing the mandate satisfactorily. Several trustees commented that many poverty-related concerns fell within the mandates of other agencies and, therefore, that school districts should not take them on. For example, one argued that if other agencies were executing their mandates properly, school districts would face fewer poverty-related problems:

> My real feeling is that the school systems would come very late in that process [of addressing poverty-related issues]. I think that that's where our social services departments, or our health departments would and should be. And they should be there. And if they were there early enough, then we wouldn't have as big a problem in school.

In making a similar point, another trustee referred to the magnitude of poverty-related issues:

> My inclination would be to say that we can't solve that problem [poverty] right now. It takes a larger effort from society to do it, and we should concentrate on what we have the mandate to do.

The trustees quoted above all felt that school districts should not take on additional responsibilities for the education of poor children. Another presented a somewhat different argument:

> Should we be delimiting what we are going to be responsible for? I mean, after all, we're an education system, so we don't have to be concerned about the social problems. We don't have to be concerned about ensuring adequate nutrition. We shouldn't be concerned with the behavioral problems that these children may bring to school. It would very nice if we just say, "We expect all this to be taken care of before you step in the door, and once you come in the door we'll take care of your

> educational needs." But that's not reality. At least it doesn't seem to be the way it works. And at this point in time, until someone decides who should feed them, they've got to be fed. Until someone decides who's responsible for handling the behaviorally disordered child, what do you do? I mean you can't just say, "Well we're not going to let you into the school."

This trustee felt that, because of the nature of some poverty-related issues, schools had no choice but to address them. Accordingly, even though sympathetic with colleagues' reservations about taking on tasks not within the mandate, this trustee believed the district had little choice but to accept responsibility for some poverty-related programming.

Issues related to mandate were central to trustees' thinking about initiating poverty-related programs. All of them expressed reservations about assuming responsibilities that did not pertain directly to the mandate to provide basic education. They believed that many of the concerns should be addressed by other agencies. Irrespective of their concerns with the mandate issue, however, several trustees, a minority to be sure, felt that the districts would have to engage in some poverty-related programming.

Extant Policies and Practices

Most of the trustees noted that the districts did not have specific educational poverty policies. One commented:

> Certainly in that broad of a perspective: looking at the urban poor and assessing their needs and wants and seeing whether they should be put in a special category, [the need for poverty policy] has never come to the board. I imagine that it's handled on a school by school basis pragmatically and ad-hoc, and not in terms of a concerted policy.

This trustee felt that the reason the district had not developed an educational poverty policy was that poverty-related issues were being satisfactorily handled at the school level.

One trustee wondered whether appropriate policies were already in place: "Perhaps we have policy on our books, and it's not being interpreted in the way that it needs to be interpreted for those particular kinds of situations." In making a similar point, other trustees spoke of two general policies which they believed addressed poverty-related issues. The first of these, noted by only one trustee, was that there was a policy wherein, with respect to school fees, "if they could not afford it, they don't have to pay." The second general policy was identified by four of the trustees from one district. They felt that practices associated with a decentralized budgeting system provided support for urban poor schools' addressing poverty-related issues. One of them noted:

> [Decentralized budgeting] made every youngster in the city worth the same money under the public purse. And that was not true for many many years. South-west Edmonton absorbed much much more than their fair share of the tax dollars that were spent on public schools. I know [that] from the inside. I sat in an office when schools from [name of an upper middle-class community] have come down and plead and plead and begged. And there would be a phone call from three or four highly placed parents, and another teacher would be added to staff. The same pressure rarely came from the north-east. ... I think the movement to school based budgeting with the publication of all of the financial data -- that this is what a youngster is worth, this is the money -- that that was a really significant change.

This trustee had observed that prior to the implementation of decentralized budgeting, urban poor schools received fewer resources than did schools in wealthier areas, and that decentralized budgeting had resulted in schools receiving an equal amount of resources per student, regardless of the location of the school. The trustee felt that this equalization of resources had been a major step in improving the quality of education in urban poor schools. The four trustees who spoke of the positive effects of decentralized budgeting also noted that the district's resource allocation system provided some advantages to urban poor schools. They referred to extra funds being allocated to schools through "transiency" and "disadvantaged school" grants. Two of them also noted that schools with low student enrollments received additional resources. They felt that this benefited urban poor schools, because most of them were relatively small.

When discussing district-level policies and practices, trustees from one of the districts also mentioned the "Head Start" and "coordinated services" initiatives which were discussed earlier under the heading of "Current Policy-Related Initiatives."

Three of the trustees noted that, in the absence of educational poverty policies, districts provided some support to urban poor schools on an informal basis. One of them commented on the nature of that informal support:

> I think the principals are given greater flexibility in terms of dealing with lateness of children, dealing with inappropriate behavior, bringing the children in and feeding them in the morning -- you know, setting up a non-threatening area where kids can come. I think there's been an effort when staff have been recruited in those schools to specifically look for people who are comfortable in working with disadvantaged children and [who] have the affinity to work with them.

So as to allow urban poor schools to address some of the concerns that such schools experienced with more intensity than did other schools, staffs in urban poor schools were allowed more flexibility than they were in other schools . The perception that urban poor schools received special consideration when staffing decisions were made was shared by two other trustees. One of them felt that this was most evident in the selection of principals, to which point the trustee simply stated: "We've had really good principals assigned to inner city schools." The trustee felt that, because having an excellent principal is crucial to the success of a school, this was a substantial form of support for urban poor schools.

Although not necessarily relating the phenomenon to any special consideration that urban poor schools may have received during staff selection, two trustees spoke of special qualities they had observed among staff members in urban poor schools. These are their comments:

> One of the things that I'm always astonished at when I go into schools which we may want to describe as being more inner city or poverty is the incredible dedication and the incredible commitment that so many of those people have.

> I became aware of it before I was a trustee, just talking to teachers and hearing the kinds of things that they have done selflessly when they were aware of a situation where a student is in that kind of a situation [poverty]. They've bought clothes for them, they've taken them on weekends, they've done a lot of things for them, and tried to help.

Both of these trustees felt that the staffs in urban poor schools extended extraordinary efforts to address special needs of students. While they both viewed this as a strength of urban poor schools, one of them raised a concern:

> I also hear that there is a frustration [among teachers]. There is a need to try and assist them, because they can keep carrying it [only] for so long, and all of a sudden you just say, "Hey, I'm out here by myself and I'm not being supported. Maybe I'm crazy and maybe I shouldn't be a softy." ... All I'm saying is once you get to that point, you can find a number of reasons to support why you should turn off.

The trustee had observed that many teachers in urban poor schools do not feel supported in their efforts to address the special needs of poor students, and that this, in concert with the extra effort and inevitable frustrations associated with working with poor students, led to some teachers "turning off."

In responding to questions about poverty-related programs, most trustees confined their comments to descriptions of one or more of the district-level programs discussed above. A few trustees, however, did identify school-level programs. Two spoke of school-level initiatives to strengthen parental and community support for the school. One of them focussed on "an excellent community school" program, noting that, even though they had a large proportion of immigrant children, the school had been successful in developing linkages between parents and the school. The other trustee felt that, generally, in the district, "there [was] a better opportunity for parents and community to become involved in schools." The trustee illustrated this point by referring to activities undertaken by two schools. The first reference was to a school celebration during which the school had formally recognized a senior citizen who "had done some work in the school and had provided some assistance to enable programs to take place." The second illustration was in reference to an observation that "in some schools there is an attempt being made to visit families and children in their homes." The trustee felt that such visits helped teachers "better understand some of the things happening to children." Three trustees referred to school-level programs to address the basic needs of poor students. All three talked about programs to "feed kids" and two mentioned "clothing banks." Only one trustee spoke of schools' efforts to enhance the self-concepts of poor children:

> The things I hear that are being done at schools are remarkable, you know, the phoning home and the good phone call, the great messages. I think recognition of a student is one of the key things.

The trustee then noted that such programs were important, not only for poor children, but for all children.

Needed or Desired Programs

During the interviews, trustees were asked whether they believed school districts should be offering programs, other than those currently in place, to address the needs of urban poor students. Those who replied that districts should offer other programs were asked what kinds of programs they felt would be most beneficial.

Only one trustee felt that the district was doing all that it should:

> There is a basic standard solid education being provided for these children in the manner which, I think, is consistent to overcome some of the social difficulties and cultural deprivation that they have, to allow them to achieve within their capacity.

Most of the other trustees felt that, while the districts were doing a fairly good job educating poor children, more could be done. One, for example, commented:

> I think certainly that there is some opportunity for principals to address it [poverty] because of the way that we do our financial planning and our school planning. I'm not sure that they're able to address it as extensively as they want to in all cases, but at least I think there's some opportunity to address it.

The same trustee commented that, although the district was doing many good things, it did not support urban poor schools to the level it should. One trustee was less positive about the current state of the same district's contribution to the education of poor children:

> I look at those youngsters and look at the kinds of skills that they have -- the kinds of things they are able to do -- and then

> look at the program match. And, you know, it seems to me that we do very little to try to serve them.

This trustee felt that the district had not been very successful at all in addressing the educational needs of poor children.

Most trustees did not identify specific programs that they believed could contribute to improving education for poor children. They spoke in more general terms. For example, one trustee, in calling for more support for the poor children in the school district, stated:

> More than anything they [schools] have to look at those children and say, "These kids already have strikes against them. How can we build their background and give them support [so] that they can go out and compete with those kids who are getting all that kind of support and help out of their homes?

Another trustee felt that the schools in greatest need should receive more resources, and that this could be accomplished by redistributing the resources available through the disadvantaged school grant so that "there are fewer schools getting more." Several other trustees felt that more resources were needed in urban poor schools. One of them, however, noted:

> Resources are not enough. I mean that's just a bare start for doing something that's very obvious. ... You know the term Head Start program. I'm not sure what that conjures up in your mind. And it's probably an inaccurate term for me to use. I don't know. But to provide for students who come from a home that doesn't have the kind of stimulation that you might, as an educator, think is required; provide some added things in a program way that you know that they're not getting at home.

This trustee believed that providing additional resources to urban poor schools was only a starting point. While not certain of the meaning of the term, the trustee called for "Head Start programs" to help students that had not received the kind of preschool "stimulation" necessary for success in school. Two other trustees also spoke about Head Start programs. One of them commented:

> I've heard of programs that I've read about, like Head Start, where they encourage, in communities in lower socio-economic

> conditions, that [they have] Head Start programs, to get kids before they do hit grade one, to give them that kindergarten and get that catching up.

The other trustee, who during a formal school board meeting had initiated a motion to "examine the feasibility of piloting a Head Start program in an inner city school," was more familiar with the nature of Head Start programs. This trustee expressed confidence in research which suggests that such programs contributed to the success of poor children.

Three of the trustees called for "parenting programs." One felt that schools, through offering parenting programs to adolescent students, could contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty for poor children:

> I think there needs to be some kind of program to teach our young students who are getting up into the junior and into the senior high a little bit about parenting. Because, if they don't get that, the experiences they have had through their childhood are just going to manifest themselves. And we are seeing it [being passed] right on to their children. And it's a never endless poor.

The other two trustees made more general comments such as, "Maybe we have to look at educating some of the parents, because I think that's where part of the problem lies."

Two trustees wanted more community involvement in the schools. One emphasized the importance of community involvement in efforts to address the needs of urban poor students:

> We need the help of all the community to address these needs. And I don't think we've really told people that. I think we've just tried to struggle on our own trying to do it. And there are people out there [willing to help].

The other described a different means of achieving community involvement:

> A lot can be done through community schools, particularly in those where there is such a high concentration [of poverty]. And I think that maybe we're a bit short on financial support for community schools.

This trustee felt that the district should be allocating more resources to urban poor schools so that those schools could more actively pursue the development of strong school-community relationships.

Two trustees felt that fundamental changes were needed. One argued that, in the current "grade system," students often progressed to the next grade without having mastered the necessary skills, and that this led to their falling even further behind. In the words of this trustee, "When they move on to the next one with only half the foundation, you're progressively digging the child deeper and deeper into a problem." This trustee believed that the solution lay in adopting a "mastery learning" system, in which children "progressed from stage to stage, based on grasping the previous unit." The other trustee who felt that fundamental changes were needed called for an approach very different from mastery learning:

> Throw the programs out the window. Go into a school and put a moratorium on achievement testing. Teachers [will] feel better about themselves if nothing else. You know, what a bunch of foolishness, to every year administer a set of tests that, before you get it you know youngsters might do poorly on it.

This trustee felt that current programs and the means of evaluating students taking those programs did not meet the needs of poor children. Of major concern was that standardized achievement tests had destructive effects on student and teacher morale, while serving no useful purpose. The trustee proposed "the British model" as an alternative educational system that would better serve poor students, noting that the British model places less emphasis on standardized testing, and that "there is much more local control over books and resources and things that are used." The trustee felt that such a system would allow schools to respond to special needs of urban poor children.

Summary

Most trustees felt that many poverty-related issues did not pertain directly to the districts' mandate. They, therefore, expressed reservations about assuming responsibility for addressing those issues, which they believed fell more directly into the mandates of other agencies.

Trustees noted that the districts did not have specific educational poverty policies. Some, however, felt that general policies contributed to the enhancement of educational opportunities for poor children. Several also noted that additional support was provided to urban poor schools on an informal basis. They referred to those schools having been allowed extra "flexibility" and having received preferential treatment when staffing decisions were being made.

The programs identified by the few trustees who commented on extant school-level poverty-related programs were: programs to strengthen parental and community support, nutrition programs, clothing banks, and programs to enhance self esteem.

When discussing means for improving the quality of education for poor children, most trustees spoke in very general terms. Several felt that urban poor schools should be given additional resources. Some called for Head Start programs, others, for parenting programs, and others, for programs to enhance community involvement. Two trustees believed that major changes to the educational system were necessary.

Perspectives on Issues Related to Political Will

Earlier, it was noted that most trustees did not feel that it was necessary to develop educational poverty policies, and that it was unlikely that such policies would be developed in the near future. This section explores aspects of the policy environment that trustees believed contributed to there having been a relatively low level of political will to develop educational poverty policies. Six themes were evident in the trustees' comments pertaining to this issue. Three of the themes seemed to be accorded minor importance, and three major importance. The three minor themes related to the adequacy of knowledge, relationships among policymakers, and societal factors. The three major themes related to mandate, the relationship of other policy issues to poverty, and the nature of advocacy.

Adequacy of Knowledge

Most of the trustees commented on the role that information or knowledge played in decisions to initiate policymaking ventures. Many such comments were made in response to the question: "What kinds of circumstances would have to be present in Edmonton before a poverty policy would be developed?" These are responses to that question:

> First of all, we would have to clearly define what we were trying to address. ... That is what I find lacking. If somebody came along, and could really say to us, "Here are your schools. Here are what the kids are experiencing, and what kinds of directions can you go to, to change that, such as starting an early start program ..."
>
> I guess there would need to be a clear understanding of what we're even talking about, when we're talking about education of the urban poor. I think that we would need to be able to define how you'd even deliver [programs to address the problems]. If you had a policy, how would you make that into a reality to address whatever it was you're trying to address?

These trustees were stating the position taken by most of their colleagues: that for policy to be initiated, they would need to have accurate knowledge about the nature of the educational problems faced by poor students, and that they would need to have knowledge of programs that would address those problems. In the words of a third trustee: "Generally, I think they [trustees] have to have a problem presented to them with a proposed solution that can be debated."

The nature and extent of the trustees' knowledge of poverty-related problems and potential strategies for ameliorating those problems have been discussed in the previous two sections of this chapter. Throughout those sections it is evident that many of the trustees were concerned that they did not have adequate information. For example, all of them noted that they were not aware of any studies or statistics that could be used to compare the academic achievement of poor children with the achievement of non-poor children.

Some trustees made very direct references to the relative adequacy of the knowledge they could bring to bear on deliberations pertaining to potential educational poverty policies. Several made the same point as the trustee who noted: "So the poverty issue: I don't know. You know, I haven't given it hours and hours of thought." These trustees noted that poverty-related issues had not been brought before them in formal board meetings and that, therefore, they had not devoted much time to attempting to understand the issues. Another trustee said:

> I'm not sure the circumstances [necessary for the development of educational poverty policies] aren't already here. I indicated earlier that the evidence of the increase [in poverty] and so on is here. I don't have the answer in terms of, you know, do we -- I just don't have the answer.

This trustee believed that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that poverty-related problems should be addressed, but was not certain as to what actions should be taken.

Generally, trustees felt that good knowledge about poverty-related educational problems and about educational programs that can address those problems were necessary pre-requisites to the initiation of policymaking ventures. They also professed to have limited knowledge in each of those areas.

Relationships Among Policymakers

All of the trustees were asked to speculate about what sources of resistance and support might obtain if a motion to develop an educational poverty policy were considered by their boards. In responding, most made some reference to their colleagues. Several felt that such a motion would be strongly supported by trustees. One, for example, said: "I'm sure the majority of trustees, if not all [would support the motion]. They are there because they really want to see something better for the kids." Several trustees from one of the districts, however, were less certain that such a high level of support existed. One felt that the board was somewhat unpredictable, and that, because trustees did not all have the same "awareness" of poverty-related issues, they might not support proposed educational poverty policies:

> I never know how my motions are going to go until after the votes are counted. I'm not sure that all trustees have the same awareness level of the need, and that, I think, is counter-productive in terms of trying to come up with policy.

Another stated quite a pessimistic view of the potential to develop such policies:

> I think with the present board that the future is not great. I think that you have a fairly conservative board. ... I think there's going to be some strong criticism of spending any money on what is looked on as social services responsibility, or health, or welfare's area of responsibility.

Having raised the concern that the conservative orientation of some colleagues would result in there being substantial resistance to the development of educational poverty policies, the same trustee observed: "Since I've been on the board, this is the first time those of us who share those concerns [for social justice] have not had a majority."

Trustees from both boards identified a phenomenon that they felt might restrict trustees from considering educational poverty policies. One trustee stated the concern as follows:

> We don't spend enough time on broad issues -- we just don't. We spend a lot of time on mundane things. I think sometimes it is easier to be an administrator than it is to be a trustee. I think sometimes we find ourselves wallowing in administrative stuff, and we shouldn't be there. But it is easier to be in there than it is to work on policy kinds of things. They're the tough things. These kinds of issues are the tough issues. I mean, how do you develop a policy on poverty? That is a lot harder to deal with than some of the basic things. And not nearly enough time is spent on it.

Societal Factors

Most of the trustees identified societal factors which they believed contributed to there being a relatively low level of political will to address poverty-related issues. One, for example, argued that the changing role of women in society, and the resultant changes in family structures, had led to children's issues being relegated to positions of relatively low priority:

> I think our society right now is out of whack. They really believe that if you can buy anything for a child, that it's not terribly important, when you're six months old, to know who mother or father is. And I really tie it right back to some place in the sixties when we decided that it was better for women to be out developing themselves because raising children was not a high priority.

The trustee then lamented: "I don't think kids are valued today." In a similar vein, another trustee expressed concern that there did not seem to be a strong societal value emphasizing the development of young children:

> I wouldn't say I get dispirited about it; that's not so. But I'm not convinced that the message is out there. Society has to say it's important to us that families and young people be helped so that by the time they get to school maybe there's some things that are already in place before we get them.

Two other trustees perceived an emerging societal expectation that educational organizations confine themselves to offering basic educational services. One observed: "Generally society is saying, 'We expect that if you're offering a good basic education throughout, that that is the job you're supposed to do.'" The trustee argued that, because of that expectation, there would be very little public support for the development of educational poverty policies.

Four trustees referred to the relationship between the poor and the non-poor in society. These are three of their comments:

> In our society we have the resources to change that [the poor being caught in a cycle of poverty]. But I don't think it's politically popular that those that have educate those that haven't, so they can be at the same economic power as everybody else.

> I think you'd find resistance [to the development of educational poverty policies] from any other special interest group that didn't feel they were getting their fair share. And I think it would be ruthless.

> I have no doubt, with today's society, [that] they don't buy that there should be a Head Start for everybody. The day I say that I believe there are certain children who lack the kind of home support [necessary for success in school] and we should give them a year extra help in getting them ready for school, I will have our so called well-to-do community demanding equal access for their children.

These trustees felt that the non-poor in society would not be willing to support policies which allocated resources to implement programs designed only for poor children. They felt that the non-poor would place extreme pressure on school boards to ensure that equal resources were allocated to the education of their children.

Mandate

It was noted earlier that concerns related to mandate were central to trustees' thinking about whether districts should assume responsibility for offering special programming for poor children. This was also true with respect to their thinking about whether districts should undertake to develop educational poverty policies. All but one of the trustees referred to mandate issues in order to explain their reluctance to support the development of such policies. In doing so, they identified two major concerns.

The first of these concerns related to the nature of the relationship between the school districts and the provincial government. One trustee, for example, spoke of experiences with projects that have been undertaken in cooperation with other government agencies:

> I'm pessimistic about getting other groups involved. ... We've tried to do a number of things with social services, and I remember working so darn hard to get the handicapped centers attached to our schools, and how hard that was to get. And then, you know, in 18 months social services pulled the rug out from underneath us. It was really very very frustrating. Since I've been on the board there have been two or three instances where they've done that. We get in with them on something and they seem to be there [because] it's politically expedient at the time for them to do something. And then two years later their enthusiasm for it, or the pressure, is off, and we'd have been better off doing it ourselves in the first place.

This trustee was suspicious of provincial government projects which provided financial support for the involvement of school districts in the delivery of special services. The trustee had observed that, in several cases, once the projects were underway the support was withdrawn, and the school board was expected to continue delivering the service. The impression that school districts had assumed many responsibilities that were not rightfully theirs was shared by most trustees. One commented:

> We take issue with the Provincial Government being, after all, the agency that is responsible for social services, welfare, medicine, nursing, and education. We have tried to argue that many of the things that are being foisted onto the board as its responsibility shouldn't be so.

Trustees felt that school boards were being asked to take responsibility for many tasks that more correctly belonged with other agencies. Another trustee illustrated how the board had recently reacted to this phenomenon:

> I supported a motion that as of January first we would not provide medical services to children in our schools. Now I found that distasteful to do, but the fact of the matter is, until we do that, we're not going to be funded for it. As long as we accept these jobs, more and more will be thrust on us. We will be looking after these handicapped kids, who God bless their souls, they need looking after. But we're looking after them with tax dollars that were designated for education.

The trustee chose this example to illustrate that, regardless of the relative worth of a cause, the board was actively resisting involvement in matters not clearly within the mandate. In responding to the member check, one trustee argued that although trustees may actively resist involvement in matters not clearly within their mandate, when final decisions are made, more often than not they take on those responsibilities.

The second major mandate-related concern was closely associated with the phenomenon of school districts having taken on many tasks that were not clearly within the mandate. One trustee raised the concern as follows:

> That raises the whole question of what is the role of the school district? Should we enter every time we see a vacuum, notwithstanding that there may be a real need? I guess it's really

> my view that unless somebody makes it our role. ... I don't believe that we could fill the Social Services needs. We don't have enough money.

Most trustees noted that their districts did not have sufficient financial resources to consider extending additional services to urban poor children. One illustrated the magnitude of this concern by stating, "the accumulated deficit in our school system is $2,500,000 and is increasing by $250,000 a year. And we start to take that into consideration." Most trustees felt that financial constraints would be a major source of resistance in efforts to develop educational poverty policies.

The Relationship of Poverty to Other Policy Issues

As noted earlier, trustees were almost equally divided in their opinions with respect to the relative severity of poverty-related issues. Some felt that the problems were quite serious, while others felt that they were not very serious at all. The position taken by a trustee with respect to this matter at least partially determined the extent of the will of that trustee to support the development of educational poverty policies. For example, a trustee who did not believe the problems to be very serious, made the following comment in response to the question, "What circumstances would need to obtain in Edmonton before policymaking would be undertaken?"

> We'd have to have gang fights in our schools that you could point your finger and say, "[Name of school], you wouldn't walk in without an armed security guard. That the principals are terrorized, that the teachers are terrorized." So it would go from the spectrum of standardized test results that would be completely out of whack, to social acting out that would be completely unacceptable, not only to the teaching force, but to the administration and to society at large. And that's not happening.

This trustee believed that poverty-related problems would have to become far more obvious and severe before trustees would consider developing educational poverty policies. Several trustees expressed similar points of view. Of course, trustees who felt that poverty-related problems were already quite severe expressed a greater willingness to support the development of such policies.

Irrespective of their positions regarding the relative severity of poverty-related issues, however, all of the trustees noted that poverty was only one of the many issues that they must consider. The relative priority of poverty among those issues, therefore, greatly influenced the extent of their political will to develop educational poverty policies. One trustee who expressed deep concern about poverty-related problems made that point as follows:

> You can see the breadth of things that come all at once. How do you put a priority? ... I know your study and your thesis is on the financially disadvantaged, but you cannot do that in isolation, you cannot, it would not be complete.

This trustee was arguing that to fully understand trustees' perspectives on poverty-related issues, it was necessary to consider the full range of issues with which they were confronted. Only then would it be possible to appreciate the difficulty that trustees faced in determining which were high priority issues requiring immediate action, and which were of lesser priority, and could therefore be deferred.

In making similar points, some trustees referred to the number of issues they had to consider. These are several of their comments:

- "There are so many different things that come at us constantly."
- "We're bombarded with a lot of demands from a number of different directions."
- "There is no shortage of issues in education."
- "We have agendas that run to eighteen items, and each one is important."

Trustees are required to address many educational issues, of which poverty is only one. As the trustees made that point, they identified the following as issues that were currently demanding attention: budget preparation, the School Act, curriculum, gifted programs, staffing, staff evaluation, early retirement incentive plans, school closures, student transportation, liability and insurance, child care, election of trustees by ward, Francophone education, second language programs, merit pay, class sizes, and school lunchroom programs.

Some trustees noted that many of these issues were at least as compelling as poverty-related issues. One, for example, commented:

> Do we give additional funding for the disadvantaged and overlook the gifted? Simply because they're gifted doesn't mean well they don't need the help. Sometimes they need as much, and more, help because they are gifted and they feel a different disadvantage. The fact that they are beyond coping with the normal and they may have their set of needs.

Another trustee made the following statement about the relationship of poverty to other educational issues:

> The fact is that the poverty issue hasn't really [been raised at the board level]. I shouldn't say it hasn't been raised, but I think that once it has been raised and discussed, it is set to rest. There are other things that continue, that you can't deny, and they continue to raise themselves.

This trustee had observed that poverty issues, when discussed at the board level, were "set to rest" before decisions to undertake action were made. Other issues were not so easily set to rest. Most trustees felt that this phenomenon had less to do with the nature of the issues than it did with the nature of the advocacy that the issues received.

Advocacy

When asked whether they had been approached by individuals or groups advocating action pertaining to poverty-related issues, all but one of the trustees said that they had not. This trustee had been approached by Humans on Welfare, the Boyle Street Coop, the Income Security Action Committee, and the Social Justice Committee of the Archdiocese of Edmonton. All of the other trustees made comments such as:

- "I can't recall a single group."

- "In my two and a half years on the board, I don't recall we've ever had a poverty issue brought forward to the board."
- "I don't think that any have brought it to my attention."
- "I don't think that our board has ever really been approached with a lot of that."

One trustee provided a more lengthy response to the same question:

> I don't hear from poor families. And this [the district's central office] may not be a very inviting place. That may be a difficulty. Even though I don't believe that I'm intimidating, the reality is that that might not be true for someone who feels that they want to come to me and talk about how poor they are and how their children aren't successful because they're poor.

Several others also noted that the poor neither organize into advocacy groups nor do they individually approach policymakers. This trustee wondered whether one of the reasons that this was so related to the poor being uncomfortable discussing poverty issues with relatively affluent policymakers. The same trustee offered other reasons as to why the poor do not actively advocate their own issues:

> Poor people are people in trauma. Their energies are going to other things. ... I mean, they're hurting, and if they have energy, I'm sure it's going to trying to find a job, trying to cope with their lives.

Three trustees believed that the poor were reluctant to come forward because, in the words of one of them, "Nobody likes to admit that they are poor."

As the following two comments illustrate, several trustees contrasted the reluctance of the poor to assume advocacy roles with the predilection of the affluent to assume such roles:

> In the less affluent areas, we find that there's rarely parents who come to the board, and rarely parents complain individually, and rarely do they exert political pressure. In the affluent areas, that's where you get the political pressures. But then there seems to be an attitude among certain trustees in past and present that unless there's a howl you don't respond. It's the affluent area that howls and so that could work against the less affluent area.

> Kids whose parents maybe are not poor, are a lot more prepared to fight with the school for their kid. ... They [the poor] approach the school in a very hesitant way and are reluctant to fight the system and yet that's often what's required.

Because the affluent assume active advocacy roles while the poor do not, the needs of the affluent are more likely to receive attention. Other trustees making a similar point referred to the relative powerlessness of the poor:

> The government isn't going to respond to the poor people. I mean the poor people aren't organized. They aren't the ones next door to the premier, getting the jobs.

> The poor aren't really a force politically. Maybe that's the biggest weakness in the whole system. They're not seen as a balance of power when it comes to politics. So they're just sort of given a few cents and pushed back. Whereas groups that can identify themselves have a lot of power and they keep digging into it.

The poor have very little political clout. This, trustees felt, would mitigate efforts to develop educational poverty policies.

As the comments above illustrate, with respect to advocacy, there were two main points upon which most of the trustees agreed. The first was that issues supported by strong advocacy groups were more likely to receive the attention of policymakers than were issues that do not receive such support. The second was that the poor do not have sufficient personal or political resources to effectively exercise advocacy, and that, indeed, the poor do not engage in advocacy.

Summary

The first of six themes that were evident in the trustees comments about policymaking was that trustees felt that, prior to developing educational poverty policies, they would need to have more precise information about the nature of poverty-related issues, the educational implications of those issues, and programs that could address the issues. The second theme pertained to trustees' perceptions that some of their colleagues were unpredictable, overly conservative, or had tendencies to become engaged in administrative tasks rather than to deal with policy issues. The third theme pertained to societal forces and values which, trustees believed, would offer resistance to the development of educational poverty policies.

The three themes noted above seemed to be accorded somewhat less importance than the remaining three. The first of these related to "mandate." Trustees were deeply concerned that many poverty-related issues were not truly within their mandate. They felt that school boards had already taken on too many responsibilities that rightfully belonged with other agencies. In presenting the second theme, it was noted that trustees must consider many issues, and that they view some of these issues as being more demanding than poverty-related issues. The final theme pertained to the nature of advocacy. The trustees had not been approached by groups advocating poverty issues. They observed that the poor, themselves, were not effective advocates. This, they felt, resulted in there being very little pressure on policymakers to consider the development of educational poverty policies.

Chapter Summary

Trustees did not agree as to whether educational poverty policies were needed. They did, however, agree that it was unlikely that such policies would be developed in the foreseeable future. They felt that much of the responsibility for developing policies to address poverty-related issues belonged with agencies other than school districts.

Trustees felt that, while the greatest concentration of poverty existed in the inner city, there were other areas that also had serious concentrations of poverty. Several expressed a belief that poverty was escalating in the city.

Trustees expressed great concern that many parents of poor children did not provide home environments conducive to children being successful in school. Most noted that the academic achievement of poor children was relatively low. However, they did not agree as to the relative severity of poverty-related problems. Some felt that the problems were very severe, while other contended that the problems were less serious, and could be overcome if only the poor would extend the necessary effort.

All of the trustees expressed concern that to engage in poverty-related programming would be to extend beyond the official mandate to provide basic education. Most, therefore, felt that the districts should not offer such programming. A few, however, argued that, because of the manner in which poverty-related problems were manifested in schools, the districts had no choice but to offer some poverty-related programming.

Trustees noted that the districts did not have specific educational poverty policies. Some of them, however, felt that other more general policies provided substantial support for urban poor schools. They also noted that such schools received additional support on an informal basis.

Trustees noted that some school-level programs were already in place: programs to strengthen parental and community support, nutrition programs, and self esteem programs. When they spoke of programs that could be implemented to improve the quality of education for poor children, some trustees called for Head Start programs; others, for parenting programs; and still others, for programs to enhance community involvement.

Most trustees felt that they would need better information prior to engaging in the development of educational poverty policies. Some also observed qualities among their colleagues that resulted in boards having difficulty addressing issues such as poverty. They noted that some of their colleagues were unpredictable, overly conservative, or had tendencies to become involved in administrative matters rather than broad policy issues. Some trustees also perceived societal forces or values which, they felt, opposed school districts' becoming involved in efforts to ameliorate the problems of the poor. They felt that school districts had already taken on too many responsibilities that more correctly belonged with other agencies and that, without additional financial support from the provincial government, they simply could not become involved in poverty-related programming. Trustees had many issues to consider, some of which they found at least as pressing as poverty. They observed that there were no advocacy groups lobbying policymakers to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. This, they noted, was problematic, in the sense that there were strong advocacy groups actively lobbying for action relative to other issues. The other issues, therefore, were more likely to be considered.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATIONS

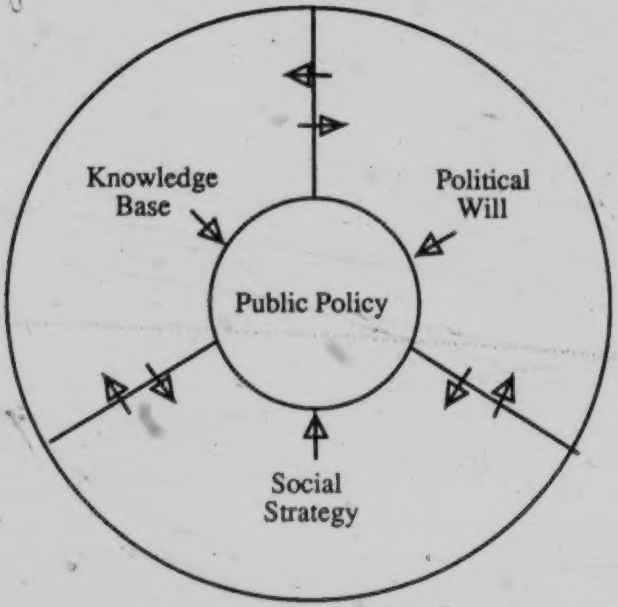
The overall purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which urban poverty in Edmonton presents issues which are likely to be considered in educational policymaking. In furthering that purpose, the discussion below focuses attention on key aspects of the interrelationships among the perspectives presented in Chapters IV, V, and VI. Direction for the discussion is provided by the four specific research questions: (1) What educational issues do key stakeholders perceive to be related to urban poverty in Edmonton? (2) From the points of view of key stakeholders, how successfully do current educational policies deal with poverty-related educational issues? (3) What factors or forces are currently acting to support or to constrain the development of new or revised policies pertaining to the education of urban poor children? and (4) Within the Edmonton context of the study, what inferences can be drawn with respect to the nature of the earliest stage of the policymaking process?

First, the Richmond and Kotelchuck (1983) Three Factor Model is used as a framework within which to discuss key issues pertaining to the potential for development of educational poverty policies in the Edmonton setting of this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the manner in which the stakeholders came to their understandings about matters related to poverty and education.

The Potential for the Development of Educational Poverty Policies

Applying the Three Factor Model to an examination of the potential for development of social policies in general, Kagan (1989, p. 437) noted that the "three factors must converge" before policymaking will be undertaken. Here, the extent to which that "convergence" existed relative to the development of educational poverty policies is examined. Before commencing with that discussion, however, convergence is defined.

Figure 4 -- Three-Factor Approach to Public Policy



(from Richmond and Kotelchuck, 1983, p. 387)

Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984) identified three criteria upon which the extent of convergence could be judged:

> - First, public policy depends on the existence of an appropriate knowledge base. A knowledge base provides the scientific and administrative data base upon which to make public health and education program decisions. (p. 207)
> - Second, public policy depends on political will. Political will is society's desire and commitment to support or modify old programs or to develop new programs. (p. 207)
> - Third, public policy depends critically on the existence of a social strategy or plan. Social strategy is a blueprint for how we are going to accomplish the worthwhile goals that we have established. (p. 208)

From their point of view, then, for convergence to exist, there must be an appropriate knowledge base, sufficient political will, and a social strategy with potential for achieving the goals proposed as policy.

Assumptions underlying the interpretive paradigm, which guided this study, introduce an important dimension to the definition of convergence. That dimension relates to the nature of reality. From the point of view of interpretive researchers, realities are constructed in the minds of individuals. This point of view requires that convergence be understood as a phenomenon that, to whatever extent it exists, exists only within the minds of key policymakers. This means that any "objective" information that may exist is relatively unimportant unless policymakers have chosen to attend to it. And then what becomes important is the manner in which the policymakers have interpreted the objective information. A similar argument holds relative to social strategies. That social strategies exist is far less important than are policymakers' perceptions as to whether they exist. Political will, also, is a phenomenon that, to whatever extent it exists, does so only in the minds of policymakers. The discussion that follows, therefore, focuses on the extent to which the three factors converge within and among the constructed realities of the stakeholders who participated in the study.

Of most significance, of course, is the extent to which the factors converged within the realities constructed by the trustees, for they are the decision makers in matters of policy. If the factors converged for the trustees, then likely, irrespective of the perceptions of principals and senior administrators, policy would be developed. That, however, was not the case. Trustees were almost unanimous in their opinions that it was unlikely that educational poverty policies would be developed in the near future. They were also divided in their opinions as to whether such policies were necessary. In circumstances such as this, where policymakers have not firmly committed themselves to a particular policy direction, the extent to which the factors converge for those in positions to influence the policymakers assumes importance. With respect to this study, senior administrators were in the best position to influence trustees, with principals having somewhat less potential influence. The discussion below, therefore, begins with a consideration of the extent of convergence within the trustees' perspectives, then moves to a similar discussion of senior administrators' and principals' perspectives. In each case two questions are addressed: (1) With respect to each of the factors in the Richmond and Kotelchuck model, to what extent did the stakeholders perceive qualities or characteristics favorable to the development of educational poverty policies? and (2) To what extent did members of the stakeholder group *agree* as to the nature of those qualities or characteristics?

The Extent of Convergence Among Trustees' Perspectives

A reading of Chapter VI leaves an impression that there was limited convergence among trustees' perspectives. The purpose here is to examine the views of trustees pertaining to each of the three factors of the Richmond and Kotelchuck model in such a way as to better define the extent of that "limited" convergence, and to offer a better understanding of the conditions underlying that level of convergence.

Convergence on Knowledge

Two criteria can be brought to bear on assessing whether or not the fund of knowledge held by a collective is favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. Such a fund of knowledge is favorable to the extent that it (1) contributes to an understanding that poverty is a serious societal problem with equally serious educational implications, and (2) contributes to a precise understanding of the educational problems associated with poverty.

Based on the first criterion, much of the knowledge that individual trustees brought to bear on their thinking about issues related to poverty and education can be viewed as having been potentially favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. Consider the following examples: With respect to demographics, the trustees agreed that serious concentrations of poverty existed in the inner city and in several other areas. Some also noted that the amount of poverty in the city was increasing. In reference to home and community circumstances, all of the trustees expressed concern that the home environments of urban poor students were not conducive to children being successful in school. Several noted that the basic needs of urban poor children were not adequately met at home. One referred to the relative instability of urban poor families. And most of them were concerned that parents of urban poor children were neither involved in, nor did they support, their children's schooling. In reference to student characteristics, one trustee noted that attendance was a problem, while two others argued that poor children presented severe behavior problems in school. Most also felt that the academic performance of those children was very low. When discussing the nature of the issues confronting the poor, several trustees argued that where there were extreme concentrations of poverty, children were likely to experience difficulties that they might not in areas with smaller concentrations of poverty. Some trustees asserted quite directly that poverty was a serious societal issue. Several also noted that as a group, the poor were not inferior to the non-poor, and were willing to work hard to escape poverty. All of these examples of knowledge displayed by trustees support the position that poverty is a serious societal problem with equally serious educational implications.

Most of the trustees, however, also brought to bear at least some knowledge which was potentially unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. One, for example, felt that poor students were achieving satisfactory academic results. Several others felt that poverty does not necessarily lead to children doing badly in school. One noted that poor families, who chose to approach their circumstances as challenges rather than as insurmountable obstacles, were likely to be successful. Another noted that, in some cases, poverty can motivate people to be successful. Three of the trustees felt that the low academic performance of students attending urban poor schools may have related more to those schools having large proportions of immigrant children, than it did to poverty. Some trustees stated directly that poverty was not a very serious concern in Edmonton. Several noted that poverty problems in Edmonton were far less severe than those in other major cities. One contended that the educational concerns experienced by the non-poor were at least as serious as those experienced by the poor. All of these examples support the position that neither poverty in Edmonton nor the associated educational concerns were very serious.

Trustees agreed only on knowledge related to demographics. For each of the other topics, some trustees demonstrated knowledge that could be judged as favorable to the development of educational poverty policies, while others demonstrated knowledge unfavorable to the development of such policies. That there was such disagreement as to the nature of matters related to poverty and education suggests that, among trustees, the level of convergence with respect to knowledge was relatively low.

The second criterion upon which knowledge could be judged as potentially favorable to the development of educational poverty policies pertains to the extent to which the knowledge contributes to a precise understanding of the educational problems associated with poverty. On this criterion, almost all of the information that the trustees provided was unfavorable. They provided very little in the way of specific information about student characteristics or about the home and community circumstances of poor children. Moreover, much of the information that was provided was either very general or based on speculation. For example, most trustees' comments about the academic achievement of poor students were of this nature:

> I can't off-hand say that I know. ... But I have the impression that it is a difficulty for the children in some of these areas to be doing well in school. ... I couldn't tell you whether as a general fact that they don't do as well. I suspect it is so though.

Although the contents of the message in this comment seem favorable to the development of educational poverty policies, that is mitigated by the lack of certainty and specificity with which the message was delivered. This was true of much of what trustees said about poverty and education.

Such lack of certainty and specificity is in sharp contrast to the manner in which principals presented their perceptions. Principals described student characteristics and home and community circumstances in detail and with assertive language which conveyed a sense of certainty. That the trustees were not able to provide similarly detailed and specific information illustrates another dimension upon which their knowledge of issues related to poverty and education was unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

Convergence on Social Strategies

Trustees differed in their opinions as to whether new social strategies were necessary to address poverty-related educational problems. One contended that the district was already doing all that needed to be done. Most others felt that, while the districts were already doing much to address the needs of poor children, more could be done. Only one stated that the district was currently doing very little. The most favorable position for the development of educational poverty policies would have been one in which all trustees agreed that the districts were experiencing very little success addressing the educational needs of poor children, and that new programs were necessary if they were to be successful in that endeavor. That the actual position was much less definite, mitigated the extent to which trustees' knowledge of social strategies was favorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

When asked about social strategies that they believed could contribute to improving education for urban poor children, most often trustees responded in general terms, calling for more support or more financial resources. Even when trustees spoke of specific programs, they described them in very general terms. For example, only one of the three trustees who spoke of "Head Start" programs was able to demonstrate knowledge of what such programs would entail. The general nature of trustees' knowledge of the social strategies they supported is also reflected in this comment made by a trustee calling for parenting programs: "Maybe we have to look at educating some of the parents, because I think that's where some of the problem lies." Trustees simply did not seem to be aware of much of the information presented in Chapter III about specific social strategies that have been demonstrated to effectively address poverty-related educational issues.

It is also significant that the trustees did not all support any particular social strategy. Three called for Head Start programs, three for parenting programs, two for greater community involvement, one for mastery learning, and another for the British model of schooling. Each seemed to have a "favorite" solution.

It is interesting to consider how the trustees supported their favorite solutions. Only one referred to research results. The others simply made assertions such as "A lot can be done through community schools," or "I think there needs to be some kind of program to teach our young students who are getting up into the junior and into the senior high a little bit about parenting." They seemed to rely on "common sense" to provide rationales for the programs they were advocating.

Trustees did not agree that new social strategies were necessary, they did not have specific knowledge of particular social strategies, they did not agree as to which social strategies were most promising, and they did not offer substantial support to defend the social strategies they recommended. Thus, even though some trustees believed that more poverty-related programs should be implemented, this assessment of trustees' understanding or relevant social strategies suggests an unfavorable stance towards the development of educational poverty policies.

Convergence on Political Will

In Chapter II, it was noted that "political will is determined by a conflation of political and value considerations" (p. 40) . The purpose here is to examine the extent to which perceptions of trustees pertaining to each of those dimensions were favorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

Trustees commented on both individual and societal values. Some, for example, felt that most trustees would support the development of educational poverty policies because "they want to see something better for the kids." Another, however, felt that, as a group, trustees were fairly conservative, and thus placed other concerns ahead of those related to social justice. Individual value orientations seemed to reflect the range indicated above, with most of the trustees being quite sympathetic to the needs of poor children.

Trustees made reference to three different societal values which they believed constrained efforts to develop educational poverty policies. Two noted that society did not seem to value the development of children to the same extent that it did at one time. Two others referred to a societal expectation that educational organizations confine themselves to offering basic educational services. And four felt that the non-poor in society were simply not willing to support new poverty programs from which they derived no direct benefits.

Among the political considerations raised by trustees, they viewed issues related to mandate and financial resources as being of great importance. Most of them expressed great reluctance to undertake responsibility for dealing with poverty-related problems which they perceived to be more justifiably the responsibility of other agencies. This was particularly so because they felt that the districts had barely sufficient financial resources to fulfill the responsibilities prescribed by mandate. Trustees also noted that there were many other compelling issues competing for their attention. The trustees' other major political consideration pertained to advocacy. They observed that issues supported by strong advocacy groups were far more likely to receive attention than were issues that did not have such support, and that there were no advocacy groups supporting poverty-related educational issues.

Of the issues discussed above, only the personal value orientations of trustees reflecting sympathy for the needs of poor children could be viewed as favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. This suggests that when the interviews were conducted, there was insufficient political will to support the development of such policies.

The Extent of Convergence Among Senior Administrators' Perspectives

When policymakers' perceptions of a potential policy issue do not sufficiently converge for a decision to initiate policymaking to be taken, the extent to which the perceptions of bureaucrats converge assumes great importance. They can exert considerable political influence. For example, bureaucrats can, as suggested by Lutz, (1977, p. 38) "control the agenda, thus preventing issues from becoming issues." This one factor is potentially of great consequence, particularly in view of some trustees' opinions that it was the responsibility of their senior administrators to take the initiative in recommending new policies or programs. The point, of course, is that the extent to which the three factors converged in the realities constructed by senior administrators likely determined the extent of their efforts to have poverty-related issues considered by trustees.

Given that they were split in their opinions as to whether educational poverty policies were necessary, and unanimous in their beliefs that such policies would not be developed in the near future, it is a reasonable point of departure to assert that the three factors did not adequately converge for the senior administrators. Further support for assuming that point of departure can be found in trustees' comments that poverty-related issues had never been brought to the board for consideration. The following discussion serves to better define the level of convergence that did exist among the realities constructed by the senior administrators, and to focus on the conditions which contributed to the extant level of convergence.

Convergence on Knowledge

As was the case with the trustees, some of the knowledge that senior administrators brought to bear on their thinking about issues related to poverty and education can be viewed as favorable to the development of educational poverty policies, and some of it can be viewed as unfavorable. That which could be judged as favorable is presented first. All of the senior administrators noted that there were areas in the city with serious concentrations of poverty. Most also felt that, over the past few decades, the number of people in the city affected by poverty had increased markedly. With respect to home and community circumstances: some of the senior administrators were concerned that many of the basic needs of poor children were not being met at home; some, that urban poor families could not afford school fees; some, that violence was common in urban poor families; and some, that the families relocated frequently. But, by far their greatest concern related to their perception that many parents of poor students did not provide home environments supportive of student learning. In reference to student characteristics, most senior administrators agreed that, generally, the academic achievement of poor children was very low. Some also felt that problems related to low self esteem and poor social behavior were prevalent among poor children. When discussing the general nature of poverty-related issues, several senior administrators argued that poor children living in areas with extreme concentrations of poverty experienced greater difficulties than did those living in areas with smaller concentrations. Many of them stated directly that they felt that the poverty-related issues confronting their districts were serious indeed. These examples of knowledge displayed by senior administrators are favorable to the development of educational poverty policies in the sense that they support the position that poverty is a serious societal problem with serious educational implications.

Only a small proportion of the knowledge demonstrated by senior administrators could be judged as unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. One senior administrator felt that poverty did not adversely affect student achievement. Another felt that poverty was, of itself, not an issue, but that it was being used as a "proxy" for a number of more specific concerns that could affect both poor and non-poor. Several senior administrators noted that poverty in Edmonton was not as serious as poverty in other major cities. Some also felt that urban poor children did not necessarily experience greater problems than did non-poor children.

Clearly, much of the knowledge demonstrated by senior administrators was favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. It is worth noting, however, that, except with respect to demographics, each of the favorable points of knowledge was raised by only three or fewer senior administrators. This reflects that, although each of the senior administrators demonstrated some favorable knowledge, there did not seem to be a uniform base of supportive knowledge shared by all of them. Moreover, many of the senior administrators said very little about the nature of home and community circumstances, or the characteristics of poor children. These factors must be kept in mind when assessing the favorability of the knowledge demonstrated by senior administrators.

The profile of the knowledge displayed by senior administrators differs from that of the trustees, not so much in the substance of the knowledge displayed, but in emphasis. A somewhat greater proportion of the trustees' knowledge was unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. There were also differences with respect to the extent to which their knowledge could contribute to a precise understanding of the educational problems associated with poverty. Certainly, some of the knowledge conveyed by senior administrators was just as speculative and general as was most of the trustees' knowledge. Several, for example made statements such as this: "I don't have any particular data, but I would certainly suspect that they wouldn't do as well." Much of the knowledge conveyed by senior administrators, however, was more precise, and certainly was delivered in more assertive language than was generally used by trustees. Language such as "certainly there is a high proportion of that, I think the evidence supports that, and certainly my observations support that" was frequently used by senior administrators. This conveys a sense of confidence and certainty about the nature of the information being conveyed that was absent in much of the trustees' discourse. Some senior administrators enhanced the level of precision of the knowledge they were conveying by describing actual experiences or circumstances to illustrate their points of view. For example, one senior administrator emphasized concern about the social behavior of poor children by telling a story of having been approached by two grade 3 children who tried to sell him some "hot merchandise." The senior administrator who had taught in an inner city school made the most striking use of this strategy.

The illustrations above demonstrate that the knowledge reported by senior administrators was somewhat more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies than was the knowledge reported by trustees. In absolute terms, however, their knowledge may not have been sufficiently favorable to support policy development. This may relate more to what the senior administrators didn't say about poverty and education than to what they did say for, as noted above, what they did say was generally favorable. There were, however, areas of knowledge, such as those pertaining to student characteristics and home and community circumstances, about which senior administrators were relatively silent. Perhaps it was this which motivated a number of them to comment that they did not have adequate information upon which to recommend policy changes.

Convergence on Social Strategies

The range of opinions of senior administrators as to whether new social strategies were necessary in order to satisfactorily address poverty-related educational concerns was very similar to that of the trustees. Two senior administrators felt that no new programs were needed. Most, however, while noting that there were already effective district and school-level programs, believed that additional programming would be useful. This, of course, falls short of the position most favorable to the development of educational poverty policies, which would have been one in which all senior administrators agreed that their districts were not successfully meeting the educational needs of poor children, and that new programs were necessary if they were to be successful in that endeavor.

As noted above, in response to questions about the social strategies they would recommend, trustees made mostly general comments about providing more support for urban poor students. The senior administrators were far more specific, identifying a variety of programs that they believed would improve the quality of education for poor children. These included programs to enhance parental involvement in school, pre-school programs, placement of social workers in the schools, nutrition programs, field trip programs, substance abuse programs, and self esteem programs. Due to this greater level of specificity, senior administrators' knowledge of social strategies can be viewed as being somewhat more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies than was the trustees'.

However, none of the social strategies mentioned above was identified by more than three senior administrators. This suggests that no particular social strategy had caught the attention of the senior administrators sufficiently to influence them to support it as a group. This, and that only one of the senior administrators referred to research in order to support recommended social strategies, diminished the extent to which senior administrators' knowledge of social strategies was favorable.

Certainly, the senior administrators' knowledge of social strategies was more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies than was the trustees'. In an absolute sense, however, their knowledge of social strategies did not seem to be sufficient to support the development of such policies.

Convergence on Political Will

Senior administrators perceived there to be a relatively low level of political will to develop educational poverty policies. Six themes were evident in their explanations as to why this was so. They noted that they did not have adequate knowledge upon which to base policy recommendations. They felt that trustees were reluctant to develop educational poverty policies for fear of stigmatizing the poor. They noted that there were other issues that demanded more immediate attention from policymakers. Senior administrators also raised concerns very similar to those raised by the trustees relative to mandate, advocacy, and societal values.

Most senior administrators expressed the personal view that educational poverty policies were not necessary. This reflects their generally low levels of motivation to initiate the development of such policies, which in turn, likely explains their not having assertively raised poverty-related issues during formal board meetings. Thus, senior administrators' "control of the agenda," which, according to Lutz (1977, p. 38) is their major vehicle for influencing political will, did not favorably contribute to the potential for development of educational poverty policies.

Overall Level of Convergence

With respect to both knowledge and social strategies, senior administrators' perspectives were somewhat more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies than were trustees'. In an absolute sense, however, even with respect to those two factors, circumstances as perceived by senior administrators were still unfavorable to the development of such policies. The overall level of convergence of senior administrators' perspectives must, therefore, be judged as relatively low.

The Extent of Convergence Among Principals' Perspectives

Principals, of course, do not have direct control over school board agendas. They do, however, have relatively frequent formal and informal meetings with senior administrators, and some such meetings with trustees. Thus, they have opportunities to influence those more directly involved in policymaking. For this study, then, the extent to which the three factors converged in the social realities constructed by the principals assumes importance, for it was likely the extent of that convergence which determined the intensity of their efforts to influence policymakers to undertake the development of educational poverty policies.

Convergence on Knowledge

Almost all of the knowledge of poverty-related circumstances demonstrated by principals was favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. They noted that there were serious concentrations of poverty in the inner city and in other areas of the city. They also noted that they had very little success when they approached their communities for funds to support field trip, swimming, and other extra-curricular programs. They expressed great concern about both the overall educational difficulties experienced by refugee, Native, and Canadian born Caucasian urban poor students, and the very poor academic performance of those groups. They perceived that violence and substance abuse were prevalent in urban poor communities. Principals felt that poor students had very low self esteem; that they did not have adequate bases of experiences upon which to build in order to learn school-related skills; that they were very transient; and that they displayed extremely poor, often violent, social behavior. Principals also observed that the problems experienced by poor students occurred far more frequently and with greater severity than did the problems experienced by non-poor students.

It is also worth noting that, with only a few exceptions, the knowledge demonstrated by all of the principals was remarkably similar. That is, unlike trustees and senior administrators, principals did seem to share a uniform body of knowledge about poverty-related circumstances. Based only on observations summarized above, it is reasonable to conclude that, overall, their knowledge was far more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies than was the knowledge demonstrated by trustees and senior administrators.

There were other qualities about the principals' knowledge that seemed to further enhance that favorableness. One such quality relates to the principals' having demonstrated far more detailed knowledge than did members of the other stakeholder groups. For example, while both trustees and senior administrators expressed concern about the academic achievement of poor students, only the principals noted that different sub-groups of the poor tended to achieve at different levels. To further illustrate this point, note the difference in detail among the following comments pertaining to student behavior. The first was made by one of the two senior administrators to express concern about the behavior of poor students. The others were made by principals as they expressed similar concerns.

> Something that comes to mind is the behavior of the children. And if they don't know how to socially interact with other children or with the teacher as an adult, it makes it very difficult for that child to learn.
>
> The teachers consciously say they're going to devote about the first six weeks of school to do your very basics: lining up, coming to school on time, looking after your pencils, raising your hand when you want to say something, not stealing something that's not yours. They know that they have to address those issues before they can start providing the kind of learning activities that the kids want.
>
> Some of my kids just don't know how to handle a confrontation. They handle it by fighting. They don't know that there's a different way to do that, because they've been taught at home that the way you do it is you fight, you fight your way out.
>
> That shows also in the school on occasion when kids -- right in the classroom -- when two kids get ticked off and all of a sudden they're punching each other.

These comments not only illustrate that the principals had more detailed knowledge, but that their knowledge was more concrete. The senior administrators and trustees often used abstractions, such as "they don't know how to socially interact," without providing examples to illustrate their meanings. Principals seldom did this. In fact, principals' arguments were often inductive, in the sense that they arrived at general conclusions from specific instances. For example:

> We have possible examples of sexual abuse, we have very poor attendance, and tardiness is very prevalent among them, physical appearance is very poor. They're dishevelled looking in the morning when they come in. They're mousy looking, they're embarrassed coming in late. ... And I think their self esteem is very devastated.

The concrete and specific nature of principals' knowledge is also illustrated in the following comment about student self esteem:

> There's so many that don't believe in themselves to begin with. ... Just simple things, you know -- ask them to sit down and do a problem. Let's say in division ... you've got a three digit number in the dividend, not in the divisor. [They say], "I can't do that, from a two to a three." You say, "Whoa! You know, it's the same steps -- same process." [They answer], "I can't do it." -- bang -- pencil down -- that's it, locked out.

Note also the certainty with which the knowledge contained in the above comments was conveyed. Perhaps this relates to the principals' knowledge having been based on their own lived experiences. Whatever the reason, the assertive language generally used by the principals projects a sense of confidence in their knowledge. Who, for example, could doubt the principal who asserted:

> It is quite a violent community. That is one of the ways problems are solved. You hear it in police sirens and the contact with the police in the school, the number of times kids come to school and talk about the fighting that went on -- the physical fighting that went on. The number of unsolved crimes in this neighborhood is one of the highest in the city.

Some of the above comments also illustrate another quality that was present in much of what principals said, but absent in most of what trustees and senior administrators said. This pertains to there having been a powerful affective dimension to much of the principals' knowledge. Consider the passion with which this principal spoke:

> The problem probably is this business of children not feeling any sense of power over their own lives. [It] is probably one of the cruxes of the the whole problem, I think. And they feel like there's no -- they feel like they're completely boxed in, and there's no way out of this whole thing. So they learn a life style in order to survive within that . You know that ghetto kids in Harlem never get any more than four blocks away from their home, on the average before they hit [age] twelve. That's the same thing that would happen with inner city kids. They're very street-wise but they don't really know what's going on in the world. ... *But they're surrounded by constant reminders about how desperate the situation is, for example, in [community name], and I think in [community name] too, the pawn shops were always a good indication about how desperate poverty really was. So the poverty that was experienced, that they're*

> *experiencing, is that kids see all in front of them in these little stores valuable things that people had to sell in order to be able to survive, things that gave them pleasure, things that were personal, and they had to sell them.* Poor financial management? I don't give a damn what it was about. That doesn't make any difference. The fact is that they had to give these things away, and the kids are constantly confronting [this]. And they start to say to themselves what is really valuable and what is going on here? Why? Why is this happening, that people are giving away things that are important to them?

With the exception of one of the senior administrators who had taught in an inner city school, none of the senior administrators or trustees spoke with such emotion. It was not uncommon, however, for principals to do so as they discussed the issues affecting urban poor children.

In summary, the principals demonstrated a uniform body of knowledge which reflected an understanding that poverty in Edmonton was a serious societal concern with serious educational implications. They presented their points of knowledge in very specific and concrete terms, and with certainty. Moreover, their knowledge seemed even more salient due to its strong affective quality. Thus, the principals' knowledge can be judged as having been very favorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

Convergence on Social Strategies

All but one of the principals felt that their districts should be providing more support for the education of poor children. Most principals, however, also noted that much was already being done. They identified school-level programs including: clothing banks, nutrition programs, student discipline programs, student training in conflict resolution, programs to enhance student self concept, cultural celebrations, and classroom cultural educational programs. Some also observed that the districts already extended substantial support to urban poor schools. Others disagreed. Of course, the most favorable position with respect to the need for new social strategies would have been one in which all principals agreed that the districts were not successfully meeting the educational needs of urban poor children, and that new programs were necessary if they were to be successful in that endeavor. Most of the perceptions of principals summarized above seem to reflect that "most favorable" position. But their position cannot be judged as having been completely favorable. One principal felt that the district need do nothing more than it was already doing, and most of the others felt that they were at least partially successful in their efforts to meet the educational needs of poor children. Notwithstanding those two points, however, the overall position of principals as to whether new social strategies were necessary seems to have been quite favorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

When asked about the nature of the additional support they would like from their districts, most of the principals called for additional financial or personnel resources. When asked to specify the programs they would introduce with the additional resources, the principals identified the following range of programs: (1) programs to enhance the experience bases of poor children, (2) smaller class sizes, (3) additional classroom program aides, (4) social workers in residence in the schools, (5) full time counsellors or school psychologists, (6) pre-school programs, (7) professional development programs, (8) programs to assist teachers with student discipline, (9) breakfast and lunch programs, and (10) enhanced community school programs. Thus, like the senior administrators, the principals were able to be relatively specific about the nature of the programs they believed would improve the quality of education for urban poor children.

On another point of similarity with senior administrators' knowledge of social strategies, none of the social strategies mentioned above was identified by more than four principals. In fact, it was noted that, if given the freedom to do so, each of the principals would have used additional resources differently. Also, none of the principals referred to research or successful practice in other urban poor environments to argue that the programs they recommended would improve the success rates of poor children. Indeed, several of the programs recommended by the principals, such as social workers in residence, and full time counsellors or psychologists, seemed to be intended more to reduce the stress felt by staff, than to improve student learning. These factors diminished the extent to which principals' knowledge of social strategies was favorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

Convergence on Political Will

The principals did not perceive there to be sufficient political will in society to motivate policymakers to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. They believed that policymakers did not have sufficiently accurate or complete information to support such an undertaking. They also felt that policymakers believed either that there were no social strategies that could adequately address poverty-related issues, or that the social strategies that were already in place were adequately addressing those issues. Some principals argued that most people in Alberta were not willing to acknowledge that poverty existed in their society. Principals also felt that financial constraints contributed to the reluctance of trustees and senior administrators to initiate new programs for poor children. However, they perceived that of the factors which contributed to there having been a relatively low level of political will, the absence of effective advocacy groups was foremost. In particular, they noted that the parents of poor children were not effective advocates.

It is also interesting to consider principals' perspectives on their own roles as advocates. Some of them noted that, in the past, principals of inner city schools met regularly and, as a group, did advocate poverty-related causes. At the time of the interviews, however, that group had disbanded, and the principals were not aware of anyone in the districts actively advocating poverty-related issues. Some of the principals felt that this may relate to very few teachers or principals staying in urban poor schools for longer than four or five years, which resulted in staffs assuming a fairly short-term perspective on the issues. Regardless of the motivation, principals were not actively advocating poverty-related causes. It seems a paradox that, while they believed strongly that the districts should provide more support for the education of poor children, they were not assertively taking advantage of their opportunities to favorably influence the political will to bring that about.

Overall Level of Convergence

The knowledge demonstrated by principals was very favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. Their perceptions pertaining to the other two factors, however, were less favorable. Their knowledge of effective social strategies was somewhat suspect, and they did not perceive there to be sufficient political will in society to support the development of educational poverty policies. Neither were they acting assertively to create sufficient political will. Thus, while the positions of principals with respect to each of the three factors may have been more favorable than were those of the trustees and senior administrators, the overall level of convergence of those factors in the realities constructed by the principals must be judged as having been relatively low.

Interpretations

The above discussion of the perceptions of trustees, senior administrators, and principals' perceptions related to the three factors in the Richmond and Kotelchuck model provides insight into the forces within the policy environment that acted to influence the motivation of policymakers to undertake -- or, perhaps better, not to undertake -- the development of educational poverty policies. With almost all of the forces having been unfavorable to the development of such policies, it is not surprising that the motivation of policymakers was relatively low. The one force that was assessed as having been very favorable, the knowledge demonstrated by principals, did not seem to be sufficient to overcome the others. This last statement assumes that the forces associated with each of the three factors were, to some extent, interdependent. Indeed, Richmond and Kotelchuck intended their model to be so interpreted. They placed arrows connecting the factors to signify such interdependence.

It is interesting to speculate how the interdependence of the factors may have contributed to the low level of motivation to develop educational poverty policies. It may have been, for example, that because trustees and senior administrators perceived very little political will to develop such policies, they did not seek out accurate information about the circumstances of poor students, nor did they seek social strategies that could effectively ameliorate those circumstances. On the other hand, noting Weiss' (1982, p. 297) assertion that "Not infrequently, the solution precedes the identification of a problem," it may have been that, if trustees or senior administrators were aware of a powerful social strategy, they might have sought the necessary information about poor children, and mustered the political will. It is also possible that if the trustees had the knowledge that the principals did, they might have sought suitable social strategies, and acted to create the necessary political will to support policymaking. It is interesting to note, for example, that the trustee who raised the motion to pilot test a Head Start program in an inner city school did so after having spent a large amount of time over one full school year conducting research in such a school. Could it have been that daily direct personal contact with the circumstances in an urban poor school resulted in this trustee developing a knowledge base similar to that of the principals? Did this motivate the trustee to seek a social strategy (Head Start programs) that could address the needs which had become more acutely aware? All this, however, must remain in the realm of speculation, for it is difficult to judge which of the factors might have been most salient. The research reported herein has only demonstrated that the forces associated with each of the factors were relatively unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

Nevertheless, the speculations offered above about possible interrelationships among the factors raises interesting questions relative to the principals' perspectives. Why did the principals' knowledge, which was very favorable to the development of educational poverty policies, not result in their seeking and obtaining information of the quality presented in Chapter III (pp. 67-77) about effective social strategies? And, similarly, why did it not result in their assuming strong advocacy roles? There seem to be several possible explanations. Perhaps principals felt that the forces associated with there having been a very low level of political will were insurmountable. Perhaps, as several of the principals noted, because most principals plan to stay in urban poor schools for relatively short times, they choose not to take the long-range perspective implied in advocating for the development of educational poverty policies. Perhaps their energies were totally consumed by the severity, frequency, and immediacy of the concerns with which they were confronted in their schools. Most likely, they were influenced by a combination of these possibilities.

Ways of Knowing

Knowledge was the factor on which the stakeholder groups demonstrated the greatest differences. Principals demonstrated a uniform body of knowledge which reflected an understanding that poverty in Edmonton was a serious societal concern with serious educational implications. They presented what they knew of these matters in very specific and concrete terms, and with certainty. There was also an affective dimension to their knowledge. Trustees and senior administrators, on the other hand, did not demonstrate a uniform body of knowledge. They were not in agreement as to the relative severity of poverty and associated educational concerns. Their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances was fairly abstract and quite general; they expressed their knowledge in detached ways which were indicative of their low levels of personal involvement. This section of the chapter examines ways in which the stakeholder groups came to know about poverty-related issues. The aim of this exercise is help readers better understand why the stakeholder groups differed so markedly in their knowledge of those issues.

Their day-to-day direct contact with poor children was the principals' major vehicle for coming to know about poverty-related issues. This was reflected in the inductive nature of most of their arguments. As noted earlier, most often, they arrived at generalizations only after citing several specific and concrete instances. This phenomenon is not exclusive to principals of urban poor schools. Mulhauser (1983, p. 65), for example, referred to research conducted by Barth and Deal which suggests that principals' discourse is characterized by "a style of presentation that sticks close to first-person, first-hand observation and narrative, expressing thoughts through stories and brief metaphors rather than extensive analysis." It would seem that the knowledge that principals value most is that which they derive from their own experiences in their schools. In this study, this "way of knowing" completely overshadowed any other that may have contributed to the principals' knowledge. No other means of coming to know about poverty-related issues was obvious at any time during any of the principals' interviews.

Senior administrators and trustees, on the other hand, seemed to come to their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances through a variety of means. Those to which senior administrators alluded during their interviews are discussed first.

Four of the senior administrators noted that they had either taught in, or been the principal of, an urban poor school. These are comments made by two of them:

> I taught nine years in inner schools [in another major city] which are far worse than anything we've got here. And I know what it's like. I know how debilitating [it can be]. In fact I quit teaching, because I didn't feel I was contributing as a teacher.
>
> There was never any teaching that I did that was more satisfying to me than teaching at [name of an inner city school] and it's because I felt like those kids desperately needed somebody.

The affective dimension, which was absent in most of the other senior administrators' knowledge, was clearly present when these senior administrators spoke of their experiences. Another senior administrator, in commenting that poverty "is something that I haven't really had experience with in the last seven or eight years since I've been in central office," was noting a limitation to the knowledge gained almost a decade ago, while teaching in an inner city school. Perhaps the length of time the senior administrator had been out of contact with poverty-related circumstances had reduced the personal emotional impact that might be associated with knowledge of poverty-related circumstances. It should be noted that, unlike the principals, these four senior administrators did not base their knowledge exclusively on experiences working in urban poor schools. Like their colleagues, they had gained their knowledge through a variety of means.

Some senior administrators referred to past personal experiences with poverty. Three indicated that they had experienced poverty in their childhoods. One simply said, "I came from that same kind of background personally," and another referred to having been born on "the wrong side of the river and the wrong part of town." Two others referred to having observed neighbors that were poor. One of them commented:

> I look back into my own life, and I look at some of the conditions and the circumstances that neighbors lived in. And I see what has happened to them. I can recall these people never considering themselves poor.

Many of the senior administrators alluded to having acquired knowledge through school visits or conversations with professionals who worked with urban poor children. Only one referred to having read professional literature in the area of poverty. Another often depended on intuition.

All of the trustees were asked about their sources of knowledge. Their responses indicate that they came to their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances through some of the same means as did senior administrators. Three professed to having had experience either working in, or volunteering their services to, urban poor schools. Two noted that they had experienced poverty in their childhoods. Four indicated that they had read about poverty-related issues in professional literature. Four referred to having learned about the issues by talking to teachers and principals at both formal and informal meetings. And one often depended on intuition.

Trustees also alluded to ways of knowing that were not evident in the senior administrators' interviews. Three noted that they had attended conferences which had addressed themes related to poverty and education. Two said that they had taken university courses that had covered some aspects of poverty in Canada. Another had read research reports on poverty. A colleague, however, noted "most board members, I think, don't read in-depth research." One trustee had visited other cities where urban poverty was prevalent.

Some of trustees' and senior administrators' ways of knowing were ostensibly the same as the principals', that is, they were based on direct contact with people and events in urban poor schools. It should be noted, however, that in several respects, the school-level experiences of senior administrators and trustees were different than those of the principals. One of those has already been mentioned. The experiences of principals were in the present time, while those of the senior administrators were in the relatively distant past. And it is a truism that time alters knowledge. A second way in which the experiences of trustees and senior administrators differed from those of principals pertains to responsibility and accountability. The principals were responsible and accountable for the operation of their schools. When trustees and senior administrators were in the schools, even though they may have been exposed to most of the same circumstances as were the principals, they were not responsible or accountable for actions relative to those circumstances. This relatively low level of responsibility could not help but mediate their experiences in urban poor schools, and thus, affect the nature of the knowledge they derived from those experiences.

Some senior administrators and trustees also professed to have knowledge of poverty due to their personal experiences of poverty in their childhoods. Knowledge so generated must be treated with great caution, for it emanates from an error in logic. The error is that it is knowledge generalized from one specific instance, that being the particular stakeholder's experience of poverty. Adams, Cameron, Hill, and Penz (1971, p. xii), in observing that only those "blessed with an exceptional stroke of good fortune or a driving natural talent" escape poverty, clarify why this error in logic is of particular concern. The senior administrators and trustees interviewed for the study were all people of proven talent. Some of the experiences they had in escaping poverty likely do not apply to the majority of the poor. Neither would the knowledge they gleaned from those experiences.

All of the other ways of knowing available to senior administrators and trustees were at least "one step removed" from the actual school-level experiences. They are valid and useful means of acquiring knowledge, but they have limitations. They will not lead to the depth of understanding demonstrated by the principals, nor can they sufficiently address the affective dimension of educating urban poor children.

These arguments suggest that it would not have been reasonable to expect senior administrators and trustees to have had the same knowledge of poverty and education as the principals. Nor should it have been expected that the knowledge that they did have would be as detailed or as compelling. As one senior administrator commented, "You've got to be there to feel it, to understand it."

Chapter Summary

Richmond and Kotelchuck's (1983) Three Factor Model was used as a framework for a discussion of the forces which were acting to support or constrain the development of educational poverty policies. It was noted that, in the social realities constructed by the trustees, qualities related to each of the three factors acted in ways relatively unfavorable to the development of such policies. Trustees did not share a uniform body of knowledge related to poverty and education, and the knowledge they did have was relatively non-specific in nature. They did not agree as to whether new social strategies were necessary, they did not have specific knowledge of particular social strategies, they did not agree as to which social strategies were most promising, and they did not offer substantial support to defend the social strategies they recommended. Trustees also perceived that there was very little political will to undertake the development of educational poverty policies.

The social realities constructed by the senior administrators relative to each of the three factors were, in many ways, similar to those of the trustees. The major difference, perhaps, was that senior administrators' knowledge of both poverty-related circumstances and social strategies was somewhat more precise than was the trustees'. Although their knowledge was greater, it did not motivate them to actively support the development of educational poverty policies.

The examination of the nature of the three factors as they were manifested in the social realties constructed by the principals suggests that principals' knowledge of social strategies and perceptions of political will were relatively unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. Their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances, however, was assessed as having been very favorable to that outcome. They shared a uniform body of knowledge which reflected an understanding that poverty in Edmonton was a serious societal concern with serious educational implications. They presented their points of knowledge in very specific and concrete terms, and with certainty. Their knowledge also had a strong affective dimension that was absent in most of the knowledge demonstrated by senior administrators and trustees.

Thus, almost all of the forces in the policy environment were relatively unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. The only positive force, that associated with principals' knowledge, did not seem to be sufficient to motivate the principals either to seek good information about social strategies or to strengthen political will by actively advocating for the development of educational poverty policies.

In examining ways in which members of the stakeholder groups came to know about issues related to poverty and education, it was noted that principals gained most of their knowledge through direct personal contact with the people and events in urban poor schools. Senior administrators and trustees, on the other hand, gained most of their knowledge from means that were "at least one step removed" from direct experience. It was argued, therefore, that trustees and senior administrators could not have been expected to have knowledge as detailed and compelling as that of the principals.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to offer conclusions, or at least tentative hypotheses, which relate to the overall purpose of the study and to the specific research questions. This includes the task of identifying areas in which further research could contribute to the central theme of this study.

It was noted in Chapter I that interpretive researchers do not seek universal truths, "for in a world of constructed social realities subject to the vagaries of human willfulness there can be no such truths" (p. 14). Instead, the goal of interpretive researchers is one of discovering working hypotheses that describe relationships in a particular setting. It is in this spirit that the positions put forth below with respect to both policymaking and the education of urban poor children are offered.

Working Hypotheses

The overall purpose of this study has been to examine the extent to which poverty in Edmonton presents issues which are likely to be considered in educational policymaking. The discussion in Chapter VII entitled "The Potential for the Development of Educational Poverty Policies" directly addresses this purpose. Based on that discussion, which demonstrated that almost all of the factors which Richmond and Kotelchuck (1983) suggested influence policymaking were relatively unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies, it would seem that the issues are not likely to be considered in educational policymaking in the near future.

While this hypothesis is supported by the data analysis (Chapters IV, V, and VI) and the discussion (Chapter VII), it must be noted that it is based on data collected at a particular time. It is entirely possible that circumstances will change in ways which will alter the forces associated with the factors in Richmond and Kotelchuck's model so as to make them more favorable to the development of educational poverty policies. Since the data were collected, for example, Alberta Education has announced a "High Need Schools Program" which will provide additional funding for urban poor schools in Calgary and Edmonton (Alberta Education, 1989). This may act to ease the concerns of trustees and senior administrators related to mandate and financial constraints, and thus to increase the political will to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Also since the time of data collection, the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation has adopted a much higher profile in advocating poverty-related causes (Helgason, 1989). Again, this may contribute to a more favorable level of political will.

At the time of this writing, however, there is evidence to suggest that the hypothesis offered above still holds. At a May 23, 1989 board meeting, a trustee moved that, "the administration bring forth a plan for an early development program for children at risk." The trustees who spoke to the motion stated four concerns: One felt that Head Start programs benefited the wealthy, and not the poor. Another, that Head Start programs would not solve the most serious problems present in urban poor schools. Most, however, were far more concerned that the district did not have the financial resources necessary to implement Head Start programs, and that to do so would be beyond the mandate. By a vote of six to three, the motion was referred back to the trustee who raised it, with directions to make the motion more specific, and to clarify issues related to mandate and finances. Clearly, policymakers were still approaching the development of educational poverty policies with extreme caution.

Addressing the Specific Research Questions

From the outset, this study has sought to explore four specific research questions: (1) What educational issues do key stakeholders perceive to be related to urban poverty in Edmonton? (2) From the points of view of key stakeholders, how successfully do current educational policies deal with poverty-related educational issues? (3) What factors or forces are currently acting to support or to constrain the development of new or revised policies pertaining to the education of urban poor children? and (4) Within the Edmonton context of the study, what inferences can be drawn with respect to the nature of the earliest stage of the policymaking process? Much of what can be said about the first three questions appears in earlier chapters. With respect to these, this section will serve to summarize the findings presented in those earlier chapters. The fourth question, however, calls for inferences that have not yet been presented.

Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of Educational Issues Related to Urban Poverty

Principals viewed issues related to poverty and education as having been extremely serious. They were concerned about the heavy concentration of poverty in some areas of the city, about the limited financial bases in the communities with heavy concentrations of poverty, about the low academic performance of most poor children, about violence and substance abuse among the children and adults in those communities, about low self esteem among poor children, about inadequate bases of experience among those children, and about the transiency of those children. They believed that the problems faced by poor students were both quantitatively and qualitatively far more serious than those faced by non-poor students.

Most senior administrators and trustees also viewed the educational issues related to urban poverty as having been quite serious. Both groups expressed great concern about home environments that they perceived were not conducive to the success of poor children in school. Most of them also expressed concern about low academic achievement of urban poor children. Beyond those two points, however, senior administrators and trustees did not seem to share a uniform body of knowledge of issues related to education and poverty. In particular, most members of both groups demonstrated very little specific knowledge of either home and community circumstances, or personal characteristics of poor children. It should also be noted that a minority of senior administrators and trustees argued quite assertively that the issues confronting the poor in Edmonton were not very serious at all.

Thus, the stakeholder groups demonstrated only partial agreement about the nature of the educational issues related to poverty. In Chapter VII, it was argued that this lack of agreement served to retard the development of educational poverty policies.

Key Stakeholders' Perceptions as to the Adequacy of Current Policies

Most of the principals noted that, while their districts did not have formal poverty policies, urban poor schools received some additional support through informal channels. All but one of the principals, however, asserted that the current level of support was insufficient. They felt very strongly that more financial and personnel resources were necessary for them to be able to satisfactorily address the educational needs of poor children.

The senior administrators were divided in their opinions as to the extent to which current policies dealt with poverty-related educational issues. A few strongly believed that new or revised educational poverty policies were necessary, more believed just as strongly that they were not needed, and yet others were ambivalent. Regardless of their positions on that question, however, senior administrators emphasized the effectiveness of their current operations in meeting the needs of poor children, and they did so to a far greater extent than did the principals. Several argued that existing general policies offered adequate guidance and support for those charged with educating the urban poor. For example, senior administrators from one district noted that the system used to allocate financial resources ensured that urban poor schools received additional resources. They also noted that, on an informal basis, urban poor schools received preferential treatment; most notably, that staff assigned to those schools were carefully chosen. Even so, most of the senior administrators would have implemented additional programming in urban poor schools if they were freed from financial constraints.

The trustees were also divided in their opinions as to the extent to which current policies dealt with poverty-related educational issues. Several believed that new or revised educational poverty policies were not necessary because existing policies were sufficient. Two felt that there was an immediate need for the development of such policies. Most, however, were ambivalent. Just as did the senior administrators, most trustees emphasized the effectiveness of the districts' current operations. Nonetheless, most trustees felt that, while the districts were doing a fairly good job educating poor children, more could be done.

In summary, the principals believed very strongly that existing policies were insufficient to ensure satisfactory levels of education for urban poor children. Senior administrators and trustees, on the other hand, did not agree on this point. Most, in fact, felt that their districts were doing a fairly good job of meeting the needs of urban poor children. In Chapter VII, the negative effect of this on the potential for the development of educational poverty policies was discussed.

Forces Acting to Support or Constrain the Development of Educational Poverty Policies

Much of Chapter VII was devoted to discussing the forces that were acting to support or constrain the development of new or revised educational poverty policies. The major conclusion drawn from that discussion was that, with the exception of those related to the knowledge bases of principals, the forces associated with each of the factors in Richmond and Kotelchuck's (1983) model were relatively unfavorable, and thus, that the motivation of policymakers to undertake the development of educational poverty policies was relatively low.

Inferences Pertaining to the Earliest Stage of Policymaking

The inferences presented in this section are subject to all of the limitations inherent in their having been drawn from the study of only one case. They are offered simply as working hypotheses based on the study of one setting. Practitioners or researchers will need to judge the applicability of these working hypotheses to their unique settings.

The most general working hypothesis that can be supported by the research herein reported is that the motivation of policymakers to initiate policymaking with respect to an issue is influenced by the three factors in the Richmond and Kotelchuck (1983) Three Factor Model, and that all of the factors are important. Just the responses of policymakers to the question, "What kinds of circumstances would have to be present in Edmonton before a poverty policy would be developed?," supports this inference. Most of those responses included reference to trustees needing accurate information (knowledge base) about the nature of the educational problems faced by urban poor students, and to their needing knowledge of programs (social strategies) that would address those problems. The trustees also emphasized the importance of political will . In particular, they noted that issues supported by strong advocacy groups were more likely to receive the attention of policymakers than were issues that did not receive such support.

The detailed analysis of the three factors (presented in Chapter VII) suggests several more specific working hypotheses that could form the basis for further research. One such hypothesis relates to the differences that were evident in both the qualitative nature and the content of principals' and trustees' knowledge of issues related to poverty and education. The arguments presented in Chapter VII under the heading of "Ways of Knowing" suggest that it would have been very difficult for trustees to acquire knowledge bases similar to those of the principals. This certainly was problematic to the development of educational poverty policies. That it was so, raises the question of whether, or to what extent, this same phenomenon affects other potential policy issues. Stated as a hypothesis:

> *The knowledge of trustees pertaining to educational issues differs in two ways from that of school-level personnel. One difference relates to the content of the knowledge. Not only do trustees may have somewhat different knowledge than do school level personnel, but the knowledge they do have is less specific and less concrete. The second difference relates to the affective dimension of knowledge. Educational issues do not have as*

> *compelling an emotional impact on trustees as they do on school-level personnel. These differences may be problematic to efforts to initiate policymaking pertaining to the issues in question.*

The rationale underlying this hypothesis is that trustees' limited school-level experiences of educational issues likely results in their knowledge of the issues differing from that of school-level personnel.

In Chapter VII it was noted that members of the stakeholder groups did not share a uniform body of knowledge of social strategies with potential to effectively address poverty-related educational issues. A question as to why this was the case arises. Perhaps it related to the time and energy of trustees having been so consumed by the number of issues with which they were confronted, or to the time and energy of principals having been consumed by the day to day events in their schools. If so, then it seems reasonable to suggest that those two stakeholder groups would have developed a uniform body of knowledge related to social strategies only if senior administrators had undertaken to educate them about the social strategies. If this is so, it would certainly add credence to Lutz' (1977, p. 38) claim that bureaucrats exercise considerable control in matters of policymaking. The working hypothesis that emerges is:

> *With respect to potential policy issues, trustees and principals demonstrate agreement about effective social strategies in circumstances when senior administrators have acted to educate them about the social strategies.*

The categorical terms in which this hypothesis is worded may provoke disagreement. Nevertheless, a study to investigate the influence of the actions of senior administrators on the nature of trustees' knowledge of social strategies would be of considerable interest.

Of the factors that trustees identified as having contributed to the relatively low level of political will to undertake the development of educational poverty policies, those related to mandate and advocacy seemed to have the greatest influence on the greatest number of trustees. Individuals, of course, were more affected by other factors, some mostly by their personal values. But, for the majority, mandate and advocacy seemed to be of greatest significance. The question of whether this applies to other issues evokes this hypothesis:

> *Educational issues that clearly fall within school district mandate, and for which there is are active advocacy groups, receive the attention of policymakers. Irrespective of other forces in the policy environment, issues that do not meet those criteria are unlikely to receive the attention of policymakers.*

Whether guided by hypotheses of this nature, or by others, studies that examine the nature of political will and how it comes to a clear focus in the realities of district-level policymakers would contribute greatly to an understanding the dynamics of the earliest stages of the policymaking process.

Usefulness of the Three Factor Model

In this study, Richmond and Kotelchuck's Three Factor Model served very well as a conceptual map. Its greatest contribution, perhaps, was that, without predicting what would be found, it provided parameters within which to search for relevant data. The model, therefore, provided the focus necessary to conduct the study, and was not in discord with the interpretive assumptions that underpined the study.

Because the model provides a vehicle for analyzing forces in the policy environment, it also is potentially of use to policy analysts. By applying the model to the study of policy issues, analysts should develop better understandings of the forces, both favorable and unfavorable to the development of policy. Such information should contribute positively to the quality of decisions related to actions to be taken by the analysts and those who commissioned the analysis. Analysts could, for example, recommend actions to build on the favorable forces and to change the unfavorable forces. Or, if the unfavorable forces were overwhelming and seemed unalterable, an analyst could then show just cause to recommend abandoning, or at least delaying, efforts to develop policy.

Comment on the Theoretical Contribution of This Study

This study was exploratory and interpretive in nature, and hence, not intended to result in the development of a theoretical schema. Nevertheless, several aspects of the study do have potential to contribute to educational policy analysis theory. These should be recognized. Some specific contributions are discussed above under the two previous headings. The contribution discussed here is somewhat broader in scope.

In Chapter I, it was noted that the "received view" of policy studies is grounded in the positivistic paradigm (Healy, 1986, p. 381). It was also noted that some contemporary scholars (e.g., Healy, 1986; Kelly, 1986; and Lincoln and Guba, 1986) advocate approaches grounded in the interpretive paradigm. These scholars have argued that interpretive approaches are necessary to accommodate the "ill structured" and "value-laden" nature of most policy issues. This study provides evidence to support such a claim.

In particular, the examination of the different stakeholders' perspectives (Chapters IV, V, VI, and VII) demonstrates clearly that "no single viewpoint, however well-informed is adequate to the task of definitively characterizing social reality, or in the case of policy analysis, of definitely formulating the problem situation (Healy, 1986, p. 387). In this study of poverty and education in Edmonton, the social realities constructed by key stakeholders differed in many respects. Moreover, those differences were of great consequence in determining whether policymakers would undertake to develop educational poverty policies.

An examination of values was also important to this study. Because poverty is a value-laden issue, a "value-neutral" stance would have severely constrained this study. The values that key stakeholders held, and the societal values they perceived, influenced them greatly in their thinking about poverty and education. The nature of this influence is discussed at greater length in Chapter IX.

Thus, this study contributes, not only to the growing body of interpretive policy research, but also to the theoretical debate as to whether interpretive inquiry is a valid means of conducting policy analysis.

Suggestions for Further Research

Several suggestions for further research were presented above as working hypotheses pertaining to the research questions. In this section, four other suggestions are offered.

From the interviews, it was clear that none of the stakeholders had data to confirm their perceptions related to the achievement or other measures of success of urban poor students. This did not seem to cause concern for the principals. From their personal involvement, they "knew" that, by any standard, poor children were relatively unsuccessful. From their points of view, no further evidence was required. Many senior administrators and even more trustees, however, were not so confident about their perceptions of the levels of success experienced by poor children. This may have been a crucial factor. If they had been more certain that poor children were not being successful in school, if they had data in which they were confident, that demonstrated the depth and extent of the problem, then senior administrators and trustees may have been more willing to consider introducing new policies or programs. What is needed, therefore, is research to demonstrate the success levels of poor children in terms acceptable to policymakers.

The research called for here would be quantitative in nature, and could make use of data that are already available. Data pertaining to academic achievement, assignment to special education classes, school leaving age, delinquency, and pregnancies, for example, are available and would serve nicely as dependent variables. Gathering good data about the independent variable (poverty) would be more difficult. Area of residence in the city could serve as a proxy for poverty, but might not be precise enough to convince critics. The income level of families would be the most precise measure, but would be difficult to gather. Moreover, even with that measure, there are weaknesses. It has, for example, been argued in previous chapters that the concentration of poverty in an area mediates children's experiences of poverty. Most likely, a poor child living in a relatively affluent area has a greater chance of being successful in school than does a poor child living in an area with a heavy concentration of poverty. Perhaps the independent variable should account both for family income and for area of residence. For the research being suggested, the rigor with which problems related to the definition and measurement of the independent variable were resolved would be a key factor in determining the extent to which the results would be accepted by critics.

This study has demonstrated that the nature of school-level experiences related to poverty and education is not well understood by practitioners who have not worked in urban poor schools. The problems this creates are exacerbated by there being no Canadian studies (at least none that this researcher was able to uncover) that have attempted to document the nature of those experiences in detail. The material presented in Chapter IV just "scratches the surface." In-depth ethnographic studies are needed to fill the void. Such studies should examine the experiences of poverty from the points of view of principals, teachers, and students. High-quality studies of this nature could contribute to narrowing the gulf in understanding of poverty-related issues that exists between school-level personnel and policymakers.

A third area in which there is an opportunity for further research relates to the principals in this study not having had an adequate understanding of the contexts and constraints within which policymakers must work. Just as it is likely that school districts would benefit from policymakers' better understanding school-level experiences, so too would districts benefit if principals better understood policymakers' experiences. The suspicions that some principals expressed about the motives of policymakers cannot be healthy for an organization. Research aimed at describing the experiences of policymakers would perhaps allay such suspicions. This is a call for in-depth qualitative studies aimed at describing the experiences of senior administrators and trustees as those experiences bear on their policymaking responsibilities.

The manner in which the stakeholders developed their knowledge of social strategies turned out to be the enigma of this study. One related hypothesis that could be investigated is stated above. But there are also more general questions that need to be answered. How do policymakers come to know about social strategies? Must they perceive sufficient political will before they will seek social strategies? What outcomes do members of the different stakeholder groups seek to achieve from the social strategies they recommend? Do principals, senior administrators, and trustees seek to achieve different outcomes? If so, why, and on what dimensions do the outcomes they seek differ? If knowledge of a social strategy is as crucial to the development of policies as Richmond and Kotelchuck (1984, p. 208) suggest, answers to these questions are necessary to an understanding of the dynamics of the earliest stages of policymaking.

Certainly the opportunities for further research which are noted above are only a few of those that could be gleaned from this study. A creative reader is sure to identify many others. Perhaps more to the point is that there is a great need for Canadian research that addresses issues related to poverty and education. Most of the poverty research that is available was conducted in the United States, and thus is devalued by Canadian policymakers. Scholars interested in contributing to improving the quality of education for urban poor children will need to attend to replicating at least some of that American research.

CHAPTER IX

EPILOGUE: REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL ACTION

In writing about "critical perspectives on change," Foster (1986, p. 165) referred to a framework developed by Oakes and Sirotnik (1986) which consists of

> a three-part paradigm involving three modes of inquiry: empirical, aimed at gathering the "facts" of the situation through such objective means as survey research and quasi-experimental methods; interpretive or hermeneutic, aimed at probing the meanings and understandings actors give to events; and critical aimed at exposing and analyzing conditions that lead to the suppression of the human spirit.

The greatest proportion of my work in this study has been in the interpretive area, with Chapters IV, V, and VI devoted to explicating the meanings and understandings of principals, senior administrators and trustees. There was much less emphasis on the empirical mode of inquiry. I did not collect new quantitative data, but did synthesize relevant existent data. I have also called for more empirical research in order to better define poverty-related problems for policymakers.

Here, I wish to reflect on the potential of this study with respect to Oakes and Sirotnik's (1986) third mode of inquiry. Certainly, by "exposing and analyzing" conditions that contributed to poverty-related issues having received relatively little attention by policymakers, Chapter VII shades into this area. But a critical stance implies more than analysis; there must also be an orientation toward action. This, Foster (1986, p. 167) referred to as "praxis," which he defined as "practical action aimed at clarifying and resolving social conditions." He noted that "praxis must be thought of as practical action, informed by theory, that attempts to change various conditions" (p. 167).

In what follows, I reflect on the manner in which the results of this study could "inform practical action." These are personal reflections. Others might suggest actions different from the ones I offer, or disagree with the logic I use to support my suggestions.

I have, therefore, endeavored to present my reflections in a manner which will allow readers to examine the logic I employ.

My strategy is to link suggestions for social action with the forces identified in Chapter VII as being unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. I contend that actions undertaken to influence those forces in such a way that they become more favorable can form the basis of a reasoned approach to social action.

Based on his discussion of "critical perspectives on change," Foster concluded that "organizational change needs to involve political action" (1986, p. 168). That would seem to hold with respect to the issues considered in this study. It is likely that the forces which contributed to the relatively low level of motivation among policymakers to address poverty-related issues will not change substantially in the natural course of events. There may be some truth in this comment made by a trustee speculating on what would have to happen in Edmonton before educational poverty policies would be developed:

> We'd have to have gang fights in our schools that you could point your finger and say, "[Name of school], you wouldn't walk in without an armed security guard. That the principals are terrorized, that the teachers are terrorized." So it would go from the spectrum of standardized test results that would be completely out of whack, to social acting out that would be completely unacceptable, not only to the teaching force, but to the administration and to society at large.

The scenario this trustee forecasted, of poverty-related problems having to become of such a scale that society could no longer ignore them before policy would be developed, is sad indeed. And without political action, that scenario may well obtain.

Who, then, should undertake political action? Arguments presented in previous chapters clarify that the poor, themselves, are not likely to take such initiative. The responsibility must reside with the non-poor. And, of the non-poor, those best situated to take on that responsibility are professionals working with the poor. My first suggestion, therefore, is that these people formally organize to advocate poverty-related causes. Once the initiative to form such a group has been taken, the matter of membership will need to be addressed. Certainly professionals from the various agencies working with poor children should be represented. But, if the group is to successfully advocate educational issues, school-level educators should also be represented among its membership. Educational policymakers would rightfully question the credibility of any group that did not have such representation.

> Reflection:
>
> *Professionals currently working with the poor should formally organize and undertake to pursue a planned, systematic approach to advocating for the development of educational poverty policies.*

Although groups advocating poverty-related causes could operate in many arenas, including health and social welfare, because the suggestions I offer below are based on the findings of this study, they focus only on actions that have potential to improve the likelihood that educational poverty policies would be developed. This should not be construed as reflecting a belief that advocacy groups should direct attention only to educational issues. There are many other societal issues confronting the poor. All deserve attention.

In the remainder of this chapter, I reflect on each of the forces identified in Chapter VII as potentially unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies, and then, based on those reflections, offer suggestions for actions.

Influencing the Knowledge Bases of Policymakers

Most policymakers did not believe that they had adequate information to support the development of educational poverty policies. This, I have demonstrated, resulted from their having had only limited exposure to poverty-related issues as they are experienced at the school level. For most policymakers, direct contact with the poor and their concerns was not among their ways of knowing about poverty and education. Baum observed a similar phenomenon throughout Canadian society:

> We cannot come to know Canadian society if we only talk to our friends. Even our newspapers tend to see social issues from the perspective of the middle class. Mainstream culture tries to make invisible the sins of society and allow the victims to disappear from our consciousness. Many of us never meet the poor, the unemployed, and the people who live in daily fear of security. The dominant culture tries to give the middle class a good conscience. (1987, p. 55)

Baum was arguing that Canadian society is structured such that the non-poor acquire very little knowledge of the circumstances of the poor. The poor and the non-poor simply have very little contact. They seldom travel in the same areas of the city. Nor do they participate in the same social and cultural activities. Society keeps them separate. Baum saw this as a subtle cultural conspiracy which acts to ease the conscience of the non-poor.

And this does affect policymakers in educational organizations. Most of them have had very limited and only superficial contacts with the poor. Certainly, some have made extraordinary efforts to improve their knowledge of the poor, but they are a minority, and, because of the wide range of their responsibilities, they can devote only a small amount of time to those efforts. The conspiracy to which Baum referred is also operative in the organizations in which they work. The structure of their roles draws them into contact with the non-poor, and restricts their contact with the poor. Public board meetings, conferences, and community meetings, all of which demand the time of policymakers, are middle class structures. They are not attended by the poor. One of the goals of social action must be to intervene in this conspiracy, thus to bring the plight of the poor to the consciousness of the non-poor.

In Chapter VII, it was noted that: (1) Trustees did not share a uniform body of knowledge about poverty and education. Some of the information that trustees demonstrated was favorable to the development of poverty policies, and some of it, unfavorable. (2) The trustees displayed very little specific knowledge about poverty-related circumstances. Moreover, many of the trustees were fairly uncertain about the knowledge they did display. (3) The affective dimension of poverty-related circumstances -- a sense of urgency and deep feeling -- seemed to be missing from the trustees' knowledge of those circumstances. They did not seem to appreciate the overwhelming negative emotional impact of poverty-related circumstances on students, parents, and school-level staff. Each of these aspects of policymakers' knowledge bases was unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies. As such, they are targets for social action.

There are likely many reasonable courses of action that advocacy groups could pursue to favorably influence the knowledge bases of educational policymakers. Perhaps the key issue is to recognize that such action is necessary, and then to take a reasoned approach in carrying it out. I offer the following suggestions in this spirit.

The overall approach, of course, must be one of gathering and disseminating information that could favorably affect the knowledge bases of policymakers. Thus, the first step to which an advocacy group should attend is the gathering of reliable information. Moreover, they will need to ensure that they have unassailable evidence to support their information, for any information presented by such a group will be examined very carefully by critics.

This is not a minor point. It is one to which advocacy groups must carefully attend, and one to which they are not likely to be motivated to attend. This is so because most of those who choose to advocate poverty-related causes do so because they have been deeply moved by the personal trauma they have observed to be correlates of poverty. For them, the emotional impact of their everyday experiences of poverty-related circumstances is sufficient motivation to act. Many have difficulty understanding why policymakers require more. But they do require more, and it is up to advocates to see that policymakers are presented with the information they need. They must, therefore, take steps to acquire such information for themselves.

Part of this task would be to bring together information already available from agencies such as The Edmonton Social Planning Council (see, for example, Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1989). But more information will be required. In particular, specific information about the relative levels of success of urban poor children in school will be needed if educational policymakers are to be convinced to act. In Chapter VIII, it was noted that a quantitative study aimed at generating that information was needed. Advocacy groups should take steps to see that the necessary research is conducted. The most credible information would result from a rigorous study conducted by a researcher with an established scholarly reputation. Professors at the University of Alberta with those credentials could be sought out and approached with requests that they conduct such a study.

Reflection:

> *Advocacy groups should take steps to ensure that they have sound and defensible bases of knowledge related to poverty and education.*

Advocacy groups that do not attend to this will quickly lose credibility, for their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances is the first area that will be examined by those they approach with requests for action.

Of course, the knowledge, once obtained, must be disseminated. To that end, advocacy groups have a variety of means at their disposal. Direct personal contact with policymakers, formal written submissions, formal delegations to board meetings, workshops, and use of the media are among those means. All could be used to advantage.

Recall that most of the trustees and senior administrators who took part in this study noted that they had never been approached by individuals or groups acting as advocates for the poor, and also that poverty-related issues had never been addressed in formal board meetings. Thus, the first three of the suggestions noted above, which would correct those omissions, would provide policymakers with learning opportunities not previously available to them.

Workshops and conferences can provide policymakers with opportunities for in-depth study of poverty-related issues. The key may be obtaining their participation or attendance at the workshops. Recently, the City Centre Church Corporation coordinated such a workshop which was attended by a number of district-level policymakers. Helgason (1989) has presented a report of that workshop. If such workshops were conducted on a regular basis -- perhaps annually -- policymakers would have more frequent opportunities to enhance their knowledge of poverty-related circumstances.

Over the past several years, the media have been very interested in poverty-related issues in Alberta. This is significant, for the media can have considerable impact on policymakers (Black, 1982; Tornatzky, 1982). Advocacy groups could take advantage of this by approaching the media on a regular basis.

A strategy that employed the means of disseminating information noted above would likely contribute to policymakers developing a shared body of detailed knowledge about poverty and education. Depending on the passion with which the information was delivered, such a strategy may also contribute to policymakers coming to understand the severe emotional impact of poverty-related circumstances on children, parents, and school-level personnel. But it is likely that direct contact with the poor and their circumstances remains the best and most certain way of developing that kind of knowledge. I believe, therefore, that school-level personnel among the membership of the advocacy group should extend efforts to have policymakers visit their schools and see the circumstances first hand. During such visits, the human trauma of which the principals were acutely aware (documented in Chapter IV) should be presented as vividly as possible.

Reflection:

> *Advocacy groups should systematically take advantage of a variety of means of disseminating knowledge to policymakers. These means should include: direct personal contact, written submissions, formal delegations at board meetings, workshops, use of the media, and school visitations by policymakers.*

As will be discussed at greater length below, actions taken based on this suggestion would also contribute to the political will necessary to support development of educational poverty policies.

Influencing Policymakers' Knowledge of Social Strategies

Two themes were common to the principals', senior administrators', and trustees' knowledge of social strategies. None of those groups demonstrated even remote agreement as to which social strategy, or group of social strategies, would most effectively address poverty-related educational issues. Neither did most members of those groups seem to have grounds, other than common sense and personal experience, to support the social strategies they recommended. Both of these circumstances were judged as having been unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies.

If policies are to be developed, most likely a majority of policymakers will have to agree as to which social strategies should be specified in the policies, and they will have to be confident that they are correct. This suggests that advocacy groups could further their causes by directing attention to educating policymakers about potentially effective social strategies, and about the research and practice that supports those social strategies.

As was the case with respect to general knowledge of poverty-related circumstances, this will require that unless they are already confident in the quality of their knowledge of social strategies, advocacy groups will have to acquire that information themselves. Moreover, the knowledge they do acquire must be extremely well supported, for it will need to pass the scrutiny of skeptical critics.

The current state of knowledge about social strategies with potential for effectively addressing poverty-related educational issues was reviewed in Chapter III of this study. The research cited in that Chapter overwhelmingly supports the position that, with adequate programming, poor children can experience greater success in school and in life. Advocates should be conversant with this knowledge. They should be prepared to answer questions such as, "What can we do to address those problems?" with a more specific response than "Give us more resources." Policymakers need to know how those resources will be utilized, and what kinds of outcomes they can expect.

Because the means for disseminating information about social strategies need not differ from those used to disseminate other kinds of information, two of my suggestions for influencing policymakers' knowledge of social strategies are very similar to those for influencing their specific knowledge of poverty-related circumstances in the jurisdictions for which they are responsible:

Reflections:

> *Advocacy groups should take steps to ensure that they have sound and defensible bases of knowledge related to social strategies with potential for effectively addressing poverty-related educational issues.*
>
> *Advocacy groups should systematically take advantage of a variety of means of disseminating knowledge of potentially effective social strategies. These means should include: direct personal contact, written submissions, formal delegations at board meetings, workshops, use of the media, and school visitations by policymakers.*

Further, I suggest that to ensure that school visitations are a useful means of disseminating knowledge of social strategies, advocacy groups will have to educate school-level personnel. This study has demonstrated that most of them have very little knowledge of research and practice pertaining to potentially effective social strategies. Thus, their effectiveness as advocates is severely impaired.

Reflection:

> *Very early in their agendas, advocacy groups should undertake to ensure that school-level personnel are knowledgeable about social strategies with potential for effectively addressing poverty-related educational issues.*

Influencing Political Will

In Chapter VI, I noted that six themes were evident among the comments by which trustees conveyed their perceptions that there was a relatively low level of political will to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Each of those themes defines an area that could be targeted for action by advocacy groups.

Two of the themes related fairly directly to the knowledge bases of policymakers and could, therefore, be addressed by the suggestions already offered. This is most obviously the case with respect to the theme pertaining to trustees' observations that they did not have sufficient knowledge to undertake the development of educational poverty policies. Although, perhaps less obviously so, it is also the case with respect to the theme pertaining to trustees having many issues to consider, some of which they observed to be at least as compelling as poverty. This has to do with the perceptions of trustees as to the importance of poverty-related educational issues relative to the importance of other issues. The knowledge to which trustees would be exposed if the suggestions offered above were acted upon would have potential for altering their perceptions of the relative importance of the various issues they must consider.

Another of the themes centered on trustees' observations that there were no groups advocating poverty-related causes. The major premise underlying all of the suggestions herein presented is that effective advocacy is crucial to the development of educational poverty policies. So, in a sense, the entire chapter is a response to this theme.

The remaining three themes, however, provide clues to other actions that could contribute to generating sufficient political will to support the development of educational poverty policies. These related to the perspectives of trustees on issues related to mandate, relationships among policymakers, and societal values. Trustees were concerned that many poverty-related issues were not clearly within their mandate, and that they had already taken on too many responsibilities that more correctly belonged with other agencies. They also noted that the districts did not have the financial resources necessary to offer additional poverty-related programming. Advocacy groups should be aware that these issues bear heavily on trustees as they contemplate policymaking. The proposals that advocacy groups submit to school boards should acknowledge the difficulties trustees must face due to mandate and limited financial resources. Perhaps such groups should also extend their advocacy by approaching appropriate provincial-level politicians and administrators with requests that they increase funding for poverty-related programs. Advocacy groups could appeal to trustees to join them in this endeavor.

Reflection:

> *Advocacy groups should acknowledge that trustees are constrained by mandate and limited financial resources. They should encourage trustees to join them in appeals to the provincial government for additional funding for poverty-related programming.*

However, having acknowledged that trustees are constrained by mandate and financial resources, advocates should also note that school districts in other major Canadian cities -- Ottawa, for example -- have developed educational poverty policies even though they were working within very similar constraints. They have done so by reallocating some of the resources already within their command. I contend, therefore, that notwithstanding the issues noted above, advocacy groups should be unrelenting in their efforts to have such policies developed.

Some of the aspects of the relationships among policymakers that the trustees felt contributed to there having been a relatively low level of political will to develop educational poverty policies are likely beyond the influence of advocacy groups. For example, several trustees noted that some of their colleagues were unpredictable, and that others had a predilection for attending to administrative matters at the expense of policy matters. These aspects of the relationships among policymakers are relatively unassailable. The conservative orientation that some of the trustees observed among their colleagues seems to be similarly unassailable. Certainly, efforts to change such orientations are not likely to be successful. However, as I will demonstrate below, advocates who understand the nature of conservative values will be able to respond with proposals that, at least in part, reflect those values.

The major point that trustees made with respect to societal values was that the non-poor in society were not willing to support policies which allocated resources for programs designed only for poor children. This is the same conservative orientation that some of the trustees recognized among their colleagues. Scholars such as Baum (1987), DeRoo (1986), Dworkin (1988), Wilson, (1987), and Parish, Eubanks, Aquila, and Walker (1989) have also recognized this phenomenon and its consequences for the development of poverty policies. Wilson (1987, pp. 118-120), for example, argued that the conservative orientation of contemporary Western societies presented formidable resistance to the development of poverty policies. In explaining the dynamics underlying this resistance, he cited Thurow (1981):

> In periods of great economic progress when [the incomes of the middle class] are rising rapidly, they are willing to share some of their income and jobs with those less fortunate than themselves, but they are not willing to reduce their real standard of living to help either minorities or the poor. (in Wilson, 1987, p. 120)

In periods of economic decline, therefore, when the middle class is not experiencing growth in income, there is very little support for policies targeted at the poor. Dworkin provides further insight into these dynamics:

> The political case against egalitarianism seems to me much stronger than the economic case; indeed, it may be unanswerable. For it has proved enormously difficult to persuade successful workers, struggling to improve their living standards, to reach their culture's definition of a good life, to *vote* to keep less of what they earn. The greatest barrier to equality, in prosperous Western democracies, is the otherwise happy fact that many more voters now lose through genuine egalitarian programs than gain; even suggesting tax rises is now thought to be political suicide in America. (1988, p. 60)

On the same theme, Baum wrote:

> Almost all of us are worried about the future, struggling for our own survival, and often, possibly without noticing it, we begin to shrug our shoulders about the rest of society. Unless it is resisted by an involving political movement, scarcity inevitably produces more selfishness. We want to protect our own advantage. (1987, p. 104)

These scholars view the conservative orientation of society as the greatest obstacle to the development of poverty policies.

Baum (1987) and DeRoo (1986) offered one strategy for addressing this obstacle. They proposed social action aimed at reeducating society to a more egalitarian set of values. Baum observed that progress had already been made:

> The neo-conservative values are opposed by many circles, groups, and organizations in this country. A countermovement is in the making that defines itself in terms of social solidarity, with the Canadian churches making their own contribution to it. It is in fact quite remarkable that in Canada and even in the United States, all the mainline Christian churches have, in their public statements, opposed the neo-conservative values. This does not mean, of course, that the people in the pews have followed them. Nevertheless, the leadership is there. (1987, p. 104)

This suggests that the churches should be represented among the memberships of groups advocating poverty-related causes. Moreover, if advocacy groups follow the recommendations given above pertaining to gathering and disseminating knowledge, they will have knowledge that could contribute to a reeducative strategy, and they will have forums within which to pursue that strategy.

Reflection:

> *Advocacy groups should develop formal ties with the churches, and with them, work to bring issues of social justice for the poor to the consciousness of policymakers and the public in general.*

Most contemporary scholars concerned with poverty-related issues, however, are not as confident as are Baum and DeRoo that the conservative orientation of society can be changed in the foreseeable future. Wilson (1988, pp. 118-124), for example, argued that rather than focus on reeducation, those interested in helping the poor ought to work to make their proposals acceptable to a conservative society. He argued that other approaches were unlikely to result in policies or programs that would benefit the poor. From his point of view, unless advocacy groups act in ways to make their proposals acceptable to a relatively conservative society and its policymakers, they are likely to experience little success.

Weikart (1989) has utilized one promising strategy in his efforts to make more broad-scale implementation of Head Start programs in the United States more acceptable to those with conservative orientations. In presenting his recommendations, he focussed on the potential gains for the non-poor (see pages 73-74, this study). In particular, he demonstrated that for every dollar invested in quality Head Start programs, there is a potential return to society of seven dollars.

Reflection:

> *In arguing for the implementation of particular programs, or for the development of policies, advocacy groups should focus on the manner in which those programs or policies benefit the non-poor.*

Wilson suggested a second strategy. He argued that the problems of the poor "will have to be attacked primarily through universal programs that enjoy the support and commitment of a broad constituency" (1987, p. 120). Wilson noted that some policies and programs are of potential benefit to all segments of the population, but of greater potential benefit to the poor. Perhaps Head Start is one such program. The non-poor would derive benefits mostly related to their needs for daycare services, while the poor would derive the educational and social benefits outlined in Chapter III.

Reflection:

> *Advocacy groups should be aware of opportunities to advocate for the universal implementation of programs that have potential to enhance the life chances of the poor.*

Wilson observed that the "hidden agenda" of this strategy is to improve the life chances of the poor "by emphasizing programs in which the more advantaged groups ... can positively relate" (1987, p. 120).

Even with such strategies, however, the resistance to the development of educational poverty policies that obtains due to the current conservative orientation of society will be very difficult to overcome. Conservative critics will attack proposals from all possible directions. This reinforces the need for advocacy groups to be rigorous in obtaining unassailable knowledge of both poverty-related circumstances and social strategies with potential to ameliorate those circumstances. Proposals that are not well presented and well defended will be quickly rejected by conservative policymakers.

Summary

In reflecting on implications of the findings of this study for praxis, I have presented the following suggestions for social action:

- Professionals currently working with the poor should formally organize and undertake to pursue a planned, systematic approach to advocating for the development of educational poverty policies.
- Advocacy groups should take steps to ensure that they have sound and defensible bases of knowledge related to poverty and education.
- Advocacy groups should systematically take advantage of a variety of means of disseminating knowledge to policymakers. These means should include: direct personal contact, written submissions, formal delegations at board meetings, workshops, use of the media, and school visitations by policymakers.
- Advocacy groups should take steps to ensure that they have sound and defensible bases of knowledge related to social strategies with potential for effectively addressing poverty-related educational issues.
- Advocacy groups should systematically take advantage of a variety of means of disseminating knowledge of potentially effective social strategies. These means should include: direct personal contact, written submissions, formal delegations at board meetings, workshops, use of the media, and school visitations by policymakers.
- Very early in their agendas, advocacy groups should undertake to ensure that school-level personnel are knowledgeable about social strategies with potential for effectively addressing poverty-related educational issues.

- Advocacy groups should acknowledge that trustees are constrained by mandate and limited financial resources. They should encourage trustees to join them in appeals to the provincial government for additional funding for poverty-related programming.
- Advocacy groups should develop formal ties with the churches, and with them, work to bring issues of social justice for the poor to the consciousness of policymakers and the public in general.
- In arguing for the implementation of particular programs, or for the development of policies, advocacy groups should focus on the manner in which those programs or policies benefit the non-poor.
- Advocacy groups should be aware of opportunities to advocate for the universal implementation of programs that have potential to enhance the life chances of the poor.

I offered each of these suggestions as having potential to positively influence forces within the policy environment that this study demonstrated were unfavorable to the development of educational poverty policies in Edmonton. I contend, therefore, that, taken together, these suggestions could form the basis of a reasoned approach to advocating for the development of such policies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Principals' Interview Guide

Prior to the interview, discuss the nature of the study and matters of anonymity and confidentiality. Also record the principal's name, school, and length of service at that school.

1. As I mentioned prior to turning on the tape, the first question relates to the demographics of poverty in Edmonton. Based on your experience with your school district, how prevalent would your say poverty is in Edmonton's schools?
2. Again, as we discussed before turning on the tape recorder, the second question is very general in nature. When you think of poverty and education, what comes to mind?
3. How would you describe the socio-economic make-up of the community your school serves? What would you estimate to be the percentage of your students from low income families? How many are receiving social assistance?
4. Does this affect the dynamics of your school? If so, in what ways? How does this affect you and your staff?
5. Relative to children from middle class families, how do children from poorer families do in school? Why?
6. Do poor children have learning needs that are different from those of middle class children? If so, in what way? If not, why do they do less well in school? [The last of these questions should be asked only if the respondent has indicated that poor children do indeed do less well in school.]
7. How does your school attempt to meet the needs of the poor children it serves? Who supports these programs? How successful are they?
8. What, if anything else, needs to be done? If you had unlimited resources, what would you do? What programs would you expect to be most successful?
9. In what ways does your district address issues related to the education of poor children? Are there any district level programs? If so, what are they and how effective are they?
10. Is your district involved at the level at which it should be? If not, what do you believe the district should be doing?
11. Are you aware of any move afoot in your district to take a new look at issues related to the education of poor children?

12. Who, in your district (either individuals or groups), talks about this issue? Who do you think would support new initiatives or policy development related to the education of the urban poor? Who might resist such action?

13. Are you aware of anyone or any groups trying to exert influence on senior administrators and trustees with respect to this issue? If so, tell me about each of them.

14. Do you think that district administrators and trustees know the difficulties that these children face?

15. Who is, or should be, responsible for any needed changes to do with the education of the urban poor? Do you think they will act in the near future? Why or why not?

16. What circumstances would need to be present in Edmonton before educational policy pertaining to poverty issues would be developed?

17. How do poverty issues compare to others which you must consider?

18. Why is it that it seems so difficult for the poor to break out of the "cycle of poverty?" How much responsibility can and should educational organizations take for enabling the poor to break the cycle of poverty? Where else does responsibility reside?

19. Are you aware of any school or district level documents related to the education of the urban poor? How might I gain access to those documents?

District-level Administrators' Interview Guide

Prior to the interview, discuss the nature of the study and matters of anonymity and confidentiality. Before turning on the tape recorder, alert the administrator to the nature of the first two questions to be asked. Also record the administrator's name, position, district, and length of service.

1. Prior to turning on the tape recorder, I told you that the first question would relate to the extent to which poverty is evident in the schools served by your district and to where that poverty might exist. Could you comment on that now please?

2. Again, as we discussed before turning on the tape recorder, the second question is very general in nature. When you think of poverty and education, what comes to mind?

3. Relative to children from middle class families, how do economically disadvantaged children do in school? Why?

4. Do poor children have learning needs different from those of middle class children? If so, what are those needs? If not, why do they do less well in school? [The last of these questions should be asked only if the respondent has indicated that poor children do indeed do less well in school.]

5. How does your district attempt to meet the needs of the economically disadvantaged children it serves? Who supports these programs? How successful are they?

6. If you were a principal of a school with a large proportion of economically disadvantaged children and had limitless resources, what programs would you put in place? Which would be the most important to the success of economically disadvantaged children?

7. We've already talked about the policies and programs in place in your district. Are you aware of any move afoot in your district to take a new look at issues related to the education of poor children?

8. With respect to the education of the urban poor, do you think that there is a need to consider new or revised policy, at either the district or provincial levels?

9. Are you aware of anyone or any groups trying to exert influence on you or other senior administrators and trustees with respect to this issue? If so, tell me about each of them.

10. Who, in your district (either individuals or groups), talks about this issue? Who do you think would support new initiatives or policy development related to the education of the urban poor? Who might resist such action? In either case, what would their reasons be?

11. Who is, or should be, responsible for any needed changes to do with the education of the urban poor? Do you think they will act in the near future? Why or why not? (I am particularly interested in how responsibility should be divided among schools, district, and Alberta Education.)

12. What circumstances would need to be present in Edmonton before educational policy pertaining to poverty issues would be developed?

13. How do poverty issues compare to others which you must consider?

14. Why is it that it seems so difficult for the poor to break out of the "cycle of poverty?" How much responsibility can and should educational organizations take for enabling the poor to break the cycle of poverty? Where else does responsibility reside?

15. Are you aware of any provincial or district level documents related to the education of the urban poor? How might I gain access to those documents?

16. Are there others in your district that you would recommend I talk to about these matters?

Trustees' Interview Guide

Prior to the interview, discuss the nature of the study and matters of anonymity and confidentiality. Before turning on the tape recorder, alert the trustee to the nature of the first two questions to be asked. Also record the trustee's name, district and length of service.

1. Prior to turning on the tape recorder, I told you that the first question would relate to the extent to which poverty is evident in the schools served by your district and to where that poverty might exist. Could you comment on that now please?

2. Again, as we discussed before turning on the tape recorder, the second question is very general in nature. When you think of poverty and education, what comes to mind?

3. Do you have any information or impressions about how well economically disadvantaged children do in school?

4. How does your district attempt to meet the needs of the economically disadvantaged children it serves? What kinds of policies or practices are currently in place? Do you have any information or impressions about how successful they are?

5. Are you aware of any move afoot in your district to take a new look at issues related to the education of poor children?

6. How have you obtained your information and impressions pertaining to issues related to the education of poor children? From personal observations? From the administration? From parents? From principals? From reading?

7. With respect to the education of the urban poor, do you think that there is a need to consider new or revised policy, at either the district or provincial levels?

8. Are you aware of anyone or any groups trying to exert influence on you or other trustees with respect to this issue? If so, tell me about each of them.

9. What circumstances would need to be present in Edmonton before educational policy pertaining to poverty issues would be developed?

10. If a policy recommendation were to be put forward, either by a trustee or by the administration, who would support such a move, and who might resist it? In either case, what would their reasons be?

11. Who is, or should be, responsible for any needed changes to do with the education of the urban poor? Do you think they will act in the near future? Why or why not? (I am particularly interested in how responsibility should be divided among schools, district, and Alberta Education.)

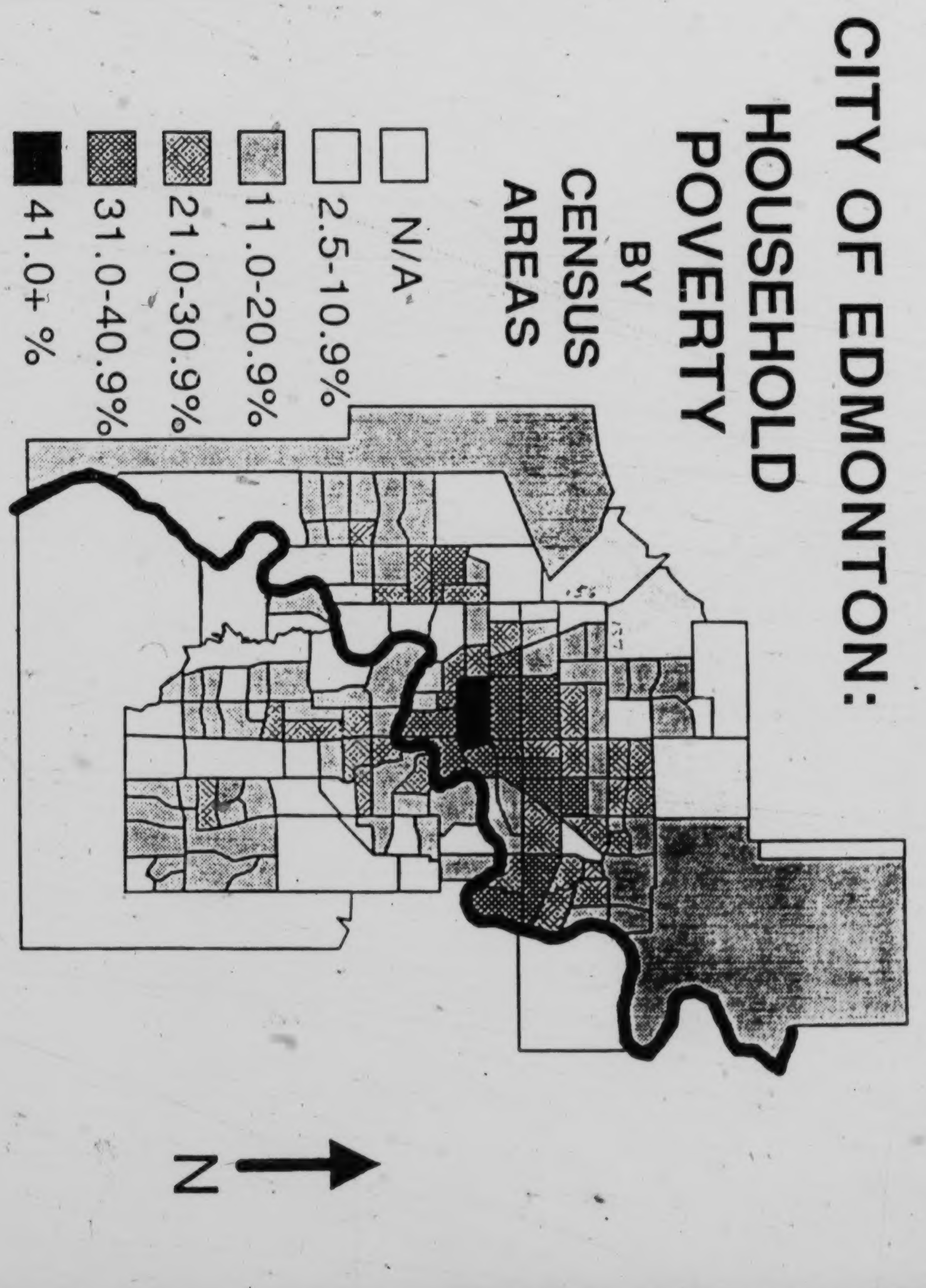
13. How do poverty issues compare to others which you must consider?

14. Why is it that it seems so difficult for the poor to break out of the "cycle of poverty?" How much responsibility can and should educational organizations take for enabling the poor to break the cycle of poverty? Where else does responsibility reside?

15. Are you aware of any provincial or district level documents related to the education of the urban poor? How might I gain access to those documents?

APPENDIX II

CITY OF EDMONTON: HOUSEHOLD POVERTY BY CENSUS AREAS


CITY OF EDMONTON:
HOUSEHOLD POVERTY
BY
CENSUS
AREAS
N/A
2.5-10.9%
11.0-20.9%
21.0-30.9%
31.0-40.9%
41.0+ %
N

APPENDIX III

MEMBER CHECK: COVERING LETTERS

Senior Administrators' Letter

June 12, 1989

[address]

Dear [name]:

Thank you for agreeing to review the chapter of my study in which I described district administrators' experiences and perceptions of poverty and education. I have included the entire first draft of that chapter. However, depending on your schedule, which I know is always busy, you may wish to read only the sections labelled "Summary" and "Chapter Summary." Those sections provide a fairly complete overview of the substance of the chapter.

The purpose of the review, of course, is to improve the "trustworthiness" of my study. Three questions are crucial to that issue:

1. Do you think the findings accurately reflect your understanding *and/or* the understanding that you perceive other senior administrators have relative to poverty and education?
2. Are there important matters that have not been included?
3. Are there matters that should not have been included?

Unless you wish to do so, do not feel as though you need to spend an inordinate amount of time on your response. A simple, direct answer to each of the questions will be just fine. On the enclosed response form, please indicate your preferred manner of sharing your comments.

Thank you very much for your participation in my study. I hope you enjoy the enclosed chapter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the study, please call me at 465-1835.

Sincerely,

Bill Maynes

Trustees' Letter

June 12, 1989

[address]

Dear [name]:

Thank you for agreeing to review the chapter of my study in which I described trustees' experiences and perceptions of poverty and education. I have included the entire first draft of that chapter. However, depending on your schedule, which I know is always busy, you may wish to read only the sections labelled "Summary" and "Chapter Summary." Those sections provide a fairly complete overview of the substance of the chapter.

The purpose of the review, of course, is to improve the "trustworthiness" of my study. Three questions are crucial to that issue:

1. Do you think the findings accurately reflect your understanding *and/or* the understanding that you perceive other senior administrators have relative to poverty and education?
2. Are there important matters that have not been included?
3. Are there matters that should not have been included?

Unless you wish to do so, do not feel as though you need to spend an inordinate amount of time on your response. A simple, direct answer to each of the questions will be just fine. On the enclosed response form, please indicate your preferred manner of sharing your comments.

Thank you very much for your participation in my study. I hope you enjoy the enclosed chapter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the study, please call me at 465-1835.

Sincerely,

Bill Maynes

APPENDIX IV

MEMBER CHECK: RESPONSE FORM

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

Name: ____________________________

1. I would like to respond in the following manner:

Go away! Don't bother me. You've already taken up too much of my time with your study.	_______
I would like to like to respond by telephone. Please call me at _______________	_______
I would like to meet with you to discuss the study. Please phone me at _____________ to arrange an appointment.	_______
My comments are provided below.	_______

2. My comments are as follows:

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Please return this form prior to June 30. Doing so will allow me to incorporate any needed changes. Once more, thank you very much for your participation in my study.

APPENDIX V

MEMBER CHECK: FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up Letter

July 10, 1989

[address]

Dear [name]:

If your response to my letter of June 12 has "crossed" with this in mail, please accept my thanks and disregard the rest of this letter. If your schedule has not allowed you to attend to reviewing my chapter on trustees' perceptions of poverty and education, however, I hope that you will have an opportunity to do so in the next few days. If your schedule is still very busy, you may wish to read only the sections labelled "Summary" and "Chapter Summary." Those sections provide a fairly complete overview of the substance of the chapter.

The purpose of the review, of course, is to improve the "trustworthiness" of my study. Three questions are crucial to that issue:

1. Do you think the contents of the chapter accurately reflect your understanding *and/or* the understanding that you perceive other senior administrators have relative to poverty and education?
2. Are there important matters that have not been included?
3. Are there matters that should not have been included?

Unless you wish to do so, do not feel as though you need to spend an inordinate amount of time on your response. A simple, direct answer to each of the questions will be just fine. On the enclosed response form, please indicate your preferred manner of sharing your comments.

Thank you very much for your participation in my study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the study, please call me at 465-1835.

Sincerely,

Bill Maynes

Response Form Included With the Follow-up Letter

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

Name: ______________________________

1. I would like to respond in the following manner:

I would like to like to respond by telephone.
Please call me at ________________ ________

My comments are provided below. ________

2. My comments are as follows:

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

Please return this form prior to July 20. Once more, thank you very much for your participation in my study.

APPENDIX VI

MEMBER CHECK: COMMENTS

The comments below are exactly as they were written on the response forms. Punctuation, spelling, and grammar have not been corrected. Greetings and words of encouragement, when those were included, have been omitted.

Senior Administrators' Comments

Senior Administrator 1

The information in this study adequately and accurately reflects my views on this topic. I especially found the summary sections readable and concise.

Senior Administrator 2

You will have to define very clearly what is meant by "poor." It is not just the lack of money. It is an attitude, it is a way of life transcended by a sense of hopelessness. For example, many immigrant children have little by way of money, but they have a will to succeed, and the support of parents to assist them. Poor means a lack of money, lack of willingness to succeed, an attitude toward life. Your chapter captures much of the nature of poverty, but you will have to decide on a definition, then apply that definition in the population.

Most groups in our society who identify a concern organize themselves to lobby effectively -- e.g. learning disabilities, mainstreaming of handicapped, etc. The poor, as a group, do not fully understand their plight, very few strong spokespeople come from them to organize and demand such and such services. They feel powerless, and so are powerless. Their plight is only recognized by well-meaning educators, some clergymen, and the odd trustee/politician at election time.

The High Needs Project in Calgary and Edmonton should prove interesting. At the moment the funds are applied to enhance the chances for academic growth or catching up. This could grow into policy development.

Senior Administrator 3

A chapter stuffed as full of opinions as you have people. I am not sure that your summaries reflect the diverse nature of the responses. At the end of the chapter I am not clear on what you have found out other than the senior administrators disagree extensively. This observation however apply to the people's views on "mandate." These seem to be consistent.

Senior Administrator 4

I have simply run out of time. Therefore I am responding only to the summaries. Sorry!

Summary -- page 47 -- I think what is missing here relates to the fact that as a district we are addressing poverty issues through such avenues as our allocation system. The statement that most of us feel poverty issues are outside our mandate is naive, if nothing else. The general tone of this summary was almost one of avoiding issues. I don't feel this is the case. I don't think we are as inhumane as this suggests.

Chapter Summary -- p. 49 Poverty related programming -- There is no mention of anything happening on a day to day basis in our classrooms. The fact that teachers are adapting to make individualized programs possible is ignored. Real programming to make a real difference will only occur within the context of the everyday school experiences we give kids.

p. 50 -- Mention again of insufficient information -- This is usually the excuse used when someone doesn't want to make a decision.

Senior Administrator 5

I think it is important to note in the summary pg. 10 that lack of policy does not denote lack of action. I know you make that point later, but I think it important not to ignore it early in the chapter.

On page 37, I cannot agree that we have ensured that "only our best are placed" ..., the problem being "only."

Page 47, last line, -- I don't know if the right connotation is apparent -- the fact there is little political will I think is more from absence of awareness than from a deliberate will not to address poverty.

Page 26 -- Should the fact that the matter most frequently raised related to lack of support for student learning be related to the fact that "schooling" is our mandate? The other factors are real concerns to us as well.

I feel there is a difference between PP. 47 and 50 re: "ameliorating the problems of the poor." I would interpret pg. 47 to be more accurate -- it reflect back to society, while the comment on pg. 50 could reflect on the trustees -- that they, the trustees, were not supportive of efforts to ameliorate .... The trustees are cognizant and prepared to do what they can within their perceived mandate.

Trustees' Comments

Trustee 1

I read this quickly! (1) It is very well written. (2) You appear judgmental in places -- is this intended? (3) Why not put initials or numbers [Trustee #3] behind quotes? As it stands there is not indication of the range of trustees quoted or frequency with which an individual is quoted. (4) Where did the interviews take place -- does the reader need to know? e.g. One trustee talks about "this place being intimidating."

Trustee 2

Is it important to identify more clearly what the role of a trustee is?

Should there be some greater descriptions of programs or efforts taking place now (if any)?

On page 35 I take another perspective on that issue -- perhaps because it was my motion and only myself and the other individual referred to voted for it. In fact I believe that trustees on our board are constantly talking about our "educational" mandate and how we are being forced to accept the jobs of other agencies (or what are perceived to be the jobs of other agencies) that when we were given information that indicated we were asking teachers to perform medical procedures on students -- some trustees found it very unpalatable to support such an action -- even though they may believe we should not be providing medical services. This incidentally I don't see as a poverty-related issue.

Trustee 3

Generally the discussion related well with what I hear from trustees or educators on "poverty and education."

My only area of concern is on pages 19 to 22. It seems to focus on the "deserving poor" as opposed to the "undeserving poor." My discussions have never shown it that black and white. There seems to be recognition that some poor are there because of a special circumstance in their life and they will overcome that chapter of life and succeed.

Some are poor but work hard, have good coping skills, positive outlooks and may never be materially well off but will be relatively content. At least as content as some $50,000 a year families that I know.

Then there are some who "life has defeated." They cannot cope, they cannot be motivated. Life is an hour to hour or day to day survival.

I thought trustees comments indicated that "mix" rather than a strong divergent view.

Further, the first two groups can be helped with some short term intervention but the third group, and children of those families, are the ones that cause "concern." The poverty is more than financial -- it is mental, social, and cultural.